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THE MIDDLE EAST

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Let me say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil in the same land . . . [W]e who have fought against you, the Palestinians—we say to you today, in a loud and clear voice: enough of blood and tears. Enough.

—Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

[L]et me address the people of Israel and their leaders . . . [a]nd let me assure them that the difficult decision we reached together was one that required great and exceptional courage. We will need more courage and determination to continue the course of building coexistence and peace between us. This is possible.

—PLO chairman Yasir Arafat

Thus the sentiments of September 13, 1993, when Rabin and Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles designed to lead to Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho. Less than four months after this historic breakthrough, however, Rabin said Arafat could "sweat" a little in negotiating the terms that would actually lead to the pullout—scheduled to have begun December 13 and still not under way; for his part, Arafat said he would not accept conditions designed to "humiliate" the Palestinians and create South African-like "bantustans" in Gaza and Jericho.

While the accords' promise may have prevented a return to past rhetorical excesses, it has done little and has in fact exacerbated the one constant in the occupied territories: the killing. The murder of Israeli settlers by fundamentalist Palestinians opposed to the accords and Israeli retaliations for the killings have escalated into a vicious cycle that shows no signs of ending. This and the impasse over implementing the accords may come to pass; the articles in our present issue offer a less optimistic view.

—W.W.F.

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"There are so many pitfalls en route to an interim arrangement [between Israel and the Palestinians], let alone the final status settlement, that the behavior of the 'Only Remaining Superpower' can either facilitate or destroy the negotiations. . . Is the Clinton Middle East team up to the task?"

The Clinton Administration and the Middle East: Squandering the Inheritance?

MICHAEL C. HUDSON

When United States President Bill Clinton took office last January, the Middle East was in its usual state of tension and turmoil. Israel had summarily deported more than 400 Palestinian militants to a snowy hillside in southern Lebanon, precipitating a suspension of the Arab-Israeli "peace process" that had been carefully nurtured by the Bush administration. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians were still pursuing the intifada, or uprising, against Israeli occupiers, more and more frequently resorting to firearms as well as stones. Outgoing President George Bush had launched two air attacks against southern Iraq to express American displeasure at Baghdad's foot-dragging on compliance with UN resolutions on weapons inspections. The militant Islamist regime in Iran, hurt by its long and unsuccessful war with Iraq in the 1980s, was actively trying to restore its economy and its military capacity; it was also lending support to several radical Islamist movements elsewhere in the region. Indeed, such movements were gaining ground in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, and among mainstream Palestinians, thus threatening Washington's conception of Middle East stability.

At the same time, however, the demise of the Soviet Union had left the United States the uncontested

superpower in the region; Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Persian Gulf War had crippled one of the most powerful Arab states, reducing its ability to threaten either Israel or the vulnerable oil-rich Arab kingdoms of the Persian Gulf. Oil was in ample supply at a reasonable price (even without Iraq's contribution). Egypt relied heavily on the United States for financial aid. Saudi Arabia and its small neighbors in the Gulf Cooperation Council depended on the United States for a security umbrella against Iraq and Iran, the two major Gulf powers. Syria had been brought into a semicooperative position, joining the American-led coalition against Iraq in the Persian Gulf War and agreeing to participate in Arab-Israeli peace talks. The only Arab regimes actively opposed to the new American hegemony—Iraq, Sudan, and Libya—were relatively weak, as was Washington's non-Arab adversary, Iran.

Clinton, therefore, faced both challenges and opportunities in this volatile region. The first challenge was conceptual. The president and his foreign policy colleagues would need to learn—quickly—about the complexities of the Middle East and its continuing importance. Second, the administration would have to confront the philosophical challenge of reconciling its stated commitment to democracy and human rights with American security interests. Then there were the main regional political issues: the Arab-Israeli conflict; Gulf security; and the ideological challenge of democratization and Islamic radicalism. The opportunities included, above all, bringing the Arab-Israeli peace process to fruition, as well as restoring some kind of normality in the Gulf and alleviating the increasing

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confrontation between political Islam and the United States.

CLINTON CONFRONTS THE "VISION THING"

Clinton had stated during the campaign that his priorities would be domestic, not foreign. During his administration's first year, it became clear he meant it. He devoted his energies overwhelmingly to domestic economic and social issues, and his foreign policy team demonstrated that its mission—and perhaps its capabilities—were limited to conducting foreign relations rather than taking foreign policy initiatives. Undersecretary of State for Policy Peter Tarnoff illustrated the administration's passivity in off-the-record remarks in May 1993. Tarnoff spoke of a reduced role for the United States overseas, and seemed to be articulating a "Clinton doctrine" in which "partnership and consensus would become paramount considerations." These utterances were widely criticized as tantamount to an abdication of America's leadership role in a new world order. To be sure, the administration hastily disavowed Tarnoff's views when they were made public, even though they did not differ substantially from comments by Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the effect that the United States could not become the world's policeman. To counter growing criticism, Christopher dispatched a cable to United States ambassadors in June 1993 listing nine major foreign policy accomplishments.¹ Number two on his list was relaunching the stalemated Middle East peace talks, which were at that point on the verge of collapse. The cable prompted an anonymous ambassador to remark that "anytime you have to list your accomplishments you know you are in trouble."

By the end of last year Clinton's foreign policy team was under sustained attack—even ridicule—from critics who accused it of drift and confusion. Key policymakers were chided for failing to articulate a coherent foreign policy philosophy. Christopher, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, and UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright all tried to explain what the administration's objectives were, but their efforts were widely judged inadequate: the "enlargement of democracy" somehow lacked the clarity of the "containment of communism." American indecisiveness in Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti overshadowed the administration's claims of success elsewhere—for example, in supporting Russian President

Boris Yeltsin in his crackdown on parliament. The October 30 *Economist* discerned a lack of leadership: "The nice men in charge of foreign policy sometimes seem unable to tell the difference between holding a seminar and governing."

Given the unprecedented leverage the United States might exert in the "new order" in the Middle East, there was intense interest in the composition of the new administration's Middle Eastern policymaking team. Some Israelis and American groups supporting Israel had opposed the nomination of Warren Christopher as secretary of state because he had not shown any pro-Israel commitment during his previous service in the Carter administration. But in his year in office the secretary has demonstrated few commitments of any kind, except (according to a State Department source) a visible anger toward Iran that stems from his bitter experiences with the United States embassy hostage crisis in the Carter years. Anthony Lake was regarded by some of his former colleagues at Mount Holyoke College as sympathetic toward Israel, but his imprint on Middle Eastern policy was not discernible during Clinton's first year. Much the same could be said for his deputy, Samuel Berger.

The decisive Middle East policymaker was Dennis B. Ross, a onetime academic with a doctorate in Soviet studies who had been a foreign policy adviser to the Bush campaign in 1988 and was appointed director of policy planning under Secretary of State James Baker 3d. He apparently served Baker well in launching the Middle East peace process that began in Madrid in October 1991. With Clinton's election Ross accepted an offer to head the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy, whose executive director, Martin Indyk, had been appointed by Clinton as the Middle Eastern specialist on the National Security Council. However, Clinton decided to retain Ross as "special coordinator for the Middle East peace talks."

Indyk was an Australian academic whose naturalization as a United States citizen had been expedited to make him eligible for an NSC appointment. He had long been known for a strong right-wing ideological commitment to Israeli causes. In 1982 he joined the principal organ of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States—the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which had come to mirror the hard-line views of Israel's Likud government. Two years later, reportedly disgruntled with AIPAC's partisan image, he and three colleagues attracted sufficient funding to establish a new think tank, the Washington Institute, to counter the influence of the allegedly pro-Arab think tanks. He succeeded beyond his wildest hopes.²

Indyk detailed the administration's Middle Eastern policy blueprint on May 18, 1993, in a speech delivered, appropriately enough, before the Washington Institute. Apart from Israel, Indyk named only two Arab governments as "friends"—Egypt and Saudi

¹Michael R. Gordon, "Christopher, in Unusual Cable, Defends State Department," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1993.

²On Indyk see Greg Sheridan, "Our Man in the White House," *The Weekend Australian* (Sydney), January 30–31, 1993, and David B. Ottaway, "Mideast Institute's Experts and Ideas Ascendant," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 1989.

Arabia. Turkey, which he would like to count as friendly because of its strategic importance to the United States in Central Asia, the Gulf, and the Levant, worried him a bit because of its reservations about supporting the Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Iraq. Indyk noted two “abiding” American interests, oil and Israel, focusing not only on Israel’s security and survival but also its “well-being,” a term he left unexplained. There were three major challenges for the United States: to turn the Arab-Israeli peace process into “peacemaking”; to contain Iran and Iraq despite their “determined efforts to rebuild their arsenals”; and to combat the rise of “violent movements cloaked in religious garb.” Indyk’s own words on this point reveal the caliber of the analysis that presumably guides the Clinton administration: “[I]n the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Iraq, [has come] the collapse of the radical, rejectionist front in the Middle East. But nature—especially Middle East nature—abhors a vacuum. With one set of troublemakers down, another set has emerged to take its place. . . .”

How might Washington manage these challenges? It would not be easy, especially—as Indyk himself observed—since “the post-cold war reality is one of reduced military and economic means to influence events. We are tasked with greater regional responsibilities and yet have less ability to fulfill them.” One way was to reduce the arms race in the region and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Another was “to promote a vision of a more democratic and prosperous region.”

It was difficult to find Middle East analysts inside or outside the United States government who were impressed with Indyk’s analysis. Some objected to his stereotyping and reductionist characterization of the Middle East in general; still others found fault with his unbalanced treatment of the Arab-Israeli situation, the naiveté of the “dual containment” slogan, and his oversimplification of the so-called Islamic threat.

Halfway through its first year the Clinton Middle East team was eliciting, at best, mixed reviews for its performance. Midlevel personnel in the executive branch commented on its relative passivity compared to the previous administration. Mideast experts outside the government criticized the administration’s apparent lack of understanding and lack of interest. Officials in Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and among the Palestinians were expressing dismay at Clinton’s and Christopher’s conspicuous lack of leadership in Middle Eastern issues and at the weakness of the Middle East team. Were these doubts justified? A look at the three issues Indyk cited as important to the United States in the region—the peace process, the Gulf War aftermath, and the Islamic “threat”—can help provide the answer.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The Clinton administration inherited the most promising Arab-Israeli diplomatic initiative since the Camp David accords of 1978. Masterminded by Bush’s secretary of state, James Baker, the “Madrid process” launched in late 1991 was a multifaceted campaign to break the Middle East impasse once and for all. That Bush and Baker were able to get this effort off the ground with an expansionist right-wing government in power in Israel (led by Yitzhak Shamir and the Likud bloc) makes the United States accomplishment all the more impressive. The Bush administration’s visible unhappiness with Shamir’s intransigence, expressed by its initial refusal to grant Israel \$10 billion in loan guarantees, may have contributed to the victory of Yitzhak Rabin’s Labor coalition in the June 1992 Israeli elections.

Rabin brought a more positive approach to the peace process. Unfortunately, the United States election campaign was by then well under way, and Bush felt constrained by pro-Israel forces at home to ease the pressure on Israel. He also pulled Baker away from the State Department to handle his reelection campaign. Both these developments slowed the momentum of the peace process. Nevertheless, the Madrid process was still a promising ongoing concern when Clinton inherited it in January 1993.

How did Clinton propose to handle the talks? According to the Indyk policy statement, the United States was to become a “full partner” in the peace process, but more a partner of Israel than of the Arab parties. In fact, by May, when Indyk delivered his speech, the peace process was in deep trouble. Christopher’s first trip to the region in February had yielded no significant results and indeed conveyed a sense of American passivity. Furthermore, the Clinton team had already made it clear it would treat Israel more favorably than it would the Palestinians. Unlike the Bush administration, which had joined the international condemnation of Israel’s deportation of 400 Palestinians to southern Lebanon, the Clinton team prevented the UN from taking firmer measures. Instead, it struck a direct deal with Israel for a phased return of the deportees and in general tried to minimize the issue. In another sign of new, warmer relations with Israel, Clinton did not object when Israel closed its borders to Palestinians in the occupied territories in March.

By April Clinton’s style and strategy had become clearer. In keeping with the incrementalist approach long advocated by the Washington Institute, Ross—no longer on Baker’s short leash—appeared to have put the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on a back burner in favor of moving forward with the Syrian-Israeli track. The tenth round of talks in Washington ended in June with no discernible progress on any front.

Indeed, the Palestinian-Israeli impasse had, if any-

thing, deepened. Palestinian delegates accused the new administration of retreating from commitments made at the outset of the Madrid negotiations—of refusing to restate that East Jerusalem was “occupied territory” and, indeed, of changing the designation of the West Bank and Gaza from “Israeli-occupied territories” to simply “the disputed territories.” By August, the “peace process,” moribund for months, was nearly dead, despite the efforts of the Clinton people. Had it not been for the Norwegian initiative bringing the PLO and Israel together for secret talks, the Middle East would have joined the list of places where the Clinton administration has been accused of foreign policy failures.

While Washington knew of the Norwegian negotiations, it did not take them seriously, and continued to insist that the Madrid talks (and their subsequent rounds in Washington) were the only game in town. In fact, Washington was unaware of Oslo’s significance until August 27, when Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres paid an unusual visit to the vacationing Christopher in California. Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst, who had masterminded the secret talks since April 1992, said of the visit: “It was quite clear that it was a big surprise we had come that far, that it was so detailed.” A senior United States official confirmed this account: “[If] the question is, did Washington—including the United States intelligence community—know it had become a ‘decision-making channel’ . . . the answer is, we didn’t.”

How can one account for the Clinton administration’s failure to understand that the Palestinians and Israelis had abandoned Washington’s patronage? According to European reports, the Clinton team had consistently denigrated Foreign Minister Peres, who was running the Norwegian negotiations, and painted Rabin much more favorably; some Israelis and Arabs closely involved with the Madrid process felt the Clinton advisers were philosophically closer to Likud than to Labor. Reports quoting anonymous Israeli officials indicated that even the Israelis had become disenchanted with Washington’s ability to bring about results through the Madrid channel.

Among several ironies in the dramatic outcome of the Oslo channel was the fact that the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks—whose members, Shamir insisted, were more moderate than the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership in Tunis—was threatening rebellion against PLO chairman Yasir Arafat as early as the failure of the tenth round in June because of rumors that Arafat was prepared to make more sweeping concessions than it was. These rumors were confirmed when the terms of the secret Declara-

tion of Principles on Palestinian self-rule were revealed at the end of August. While Arafat and the Palestinian leadership generally had lost hope in the peace process, they discovered that the Israeli negotiators in Oslo, operating under Peres and Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, were distinctly more reasonable than the Israeli delegation in Washington.

And so a joint Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel was signed on September 13—at the White House. All the parties in Oslo graciously thanked the United States for its helpfulness; the Norwegians from their commendable modesty, the Israelis and Palestinians from awareness of their need of future United States support. The administration gracefully accepted the role of belated host and went on to cosponsor (with Russia) an international donors conference to help launch the Palestinian administration in Gaza and Jericho. But to claim some credit the administration disseminated a story to the effect that Christopher’s meeting with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in August had revived the long-stalled Syrian-Israeli talks and thus may have stimulated the secret Oslo talks, reportedly “moving slowly” at the time.³

DUAL CONTAINMENT IN THE GULF

The Clinton administration’s approach to the Persian Gulf was summed up in Indyk’s speech as “dual containment” of Iraq and Iran and support for Saudi Arabia and Turkey to help stabilize a region still tense from the Persian Gulf War.

To critics “dual containment” seemed a tall order, considering that Iraq and Iran were by far the two largest countries in the Gulf. The regime in Iran was to be reformed, somehow weaned away from its anti-Western Islamist orientation. Meanwhile Saddam Hussein was to be toppled, presumably by Western support for a weak and divided opposition movement known as the Iraqi National Congress. During Clinton’s first year, however, Iran continued to pursue an independent policy and had some success in restoring economic relations with Europe, despite American protests. It continued to support Islamist opposition groups in several Arab countries—if not to the extent claimed by the administration—and it continued to rebuild its military (and perhaps nuclear) capability.

As for Iraq, there was little evidence that sanctions had seriously weakened Hussein’s regime. Baghdad seemed to be slowly deepening its control over the rebellious Shiites in the southern part of the country, despite the “no-fly zone” imposed by the United States, Britain, and France, and it was increasing its economic squeeze on the autonomous Kurdish zone in the north. Some analysts argued the policy of dual containment was creating an incentive for Iraq and Iran to overlook their deep mutual hostility and begin cooperating with one another. They also wondered whether Saudi Arabia could bear the weight as the

³Stephen Engelberg, “Intervention by Christopher Gave Impetus to Israeli-Palestinian Deal,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1993.

main pillar of American policy in the Gulf, recalling how earlier American governments had made the shah of Iran the pillar, which contributed to his downfall.

There were complications with Turkey in its assigned supporting role when the new Turkish prime minister, Tancu Çiller, urged Washington to ease the international embargo on Iraq, which had been one of Turkey's major trading partners. Moreover, Turkey's reluctant support, at Washington's behest, for the Iraqi Kurds seemed to some Turkish observers inconsistent with Turkey's interest in restoring Iraq as a territorially intact "normal" actor in regional politics. There also seemed to be some inconsistency in America's backing of Turkey's struggle against the Kurds in eastern Turkey and simultaneous support for the Iraqi Kurds. While continuous American pressure on Saddam Hussein (despite Iraq's readiness to permit UN weapons inspections) was presumably intended in part to encourage Syria's Assad to show flexibility in the talks with Israel, it also contributed to the general tension in the Gulf. Intellectuals in the oil-rich Arab kingdoms expressed concern that the United States presence had become too visible, too permanent, and too arrogant, thus inducing a degree of dependency that might eventually erode the legitimacy of the regimes Washington was trying to protect.

IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The third major threat envisaged in Indyk's NSC blueprint—Islamic fundamentalism—involved, the administration claimed, a well-coordinated campaign originating in Iran and aided by Sudan that was spearheaded by extremist groups engaged in terrorism and other violence, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The promotion of "democratic political development" and "free market economic development" would presumably counter this Islamist threat. Most students of Islamist politics, however, do not accept the claim of a cohesive, transnational Islamist movement led by Iran. That Islamist parties have done well in the few relatively free elections held in Middle Eastern countries is worth pondering; Islamist parties, which mainly favor free market economies anyway, seem to generate support from those strata that suffer the pain of "structural adjustment" to market economies.

American popular stereotyping of Muslims as inferior people and terrorists complicated the administration's efforts to deal with populist Islam throughout the Middle East. To his credit, Clinton received the Indian-British author Salman Rushdie and condemned the Iranian religious *fatwa* calling for Muslims to kill him because of his "blasphemous" book, *The Satanic Verses*. Even though Clinton's step would be exploited by Islamist radicals to deepen further the popular "gap" between Islam and the West, it was also likely to win the admiration of many liberal Muslims.

The other major ideological issue confronting the Clinton administration has been the extent to which its rhetoric about the enlargement of democracy in the world applies to the Middle East. There was a widespread perception in the Middle East that the United States was actually lukewarm, if not hostile, toward democratic politics in the region, as indicated by American acquiescence to the antidemocratic coup in Algeria in January 1992, criticism of anti-American activities by political parties in Jordan, only perfunctory support for Yemen's experiment with an elected parliament beginning last year, and Washington's perceived reluctance to promote genuine democracy among its less-than-democratic allies in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and elsewhere. Throughout the Arab world opinion makers who criticized Washington for being excessively interventionist in a military sense deplored America's reluctance to press for political liberalization, notwithstanding its pro-democracy rhetoric.

AFTER OSLO

It is easy to be skeptical, if not downright critical, of the Clinton administration's policy performance on Gulf security and the ideological challenge of Islamism and democratization. One can also cast a jaundiced eye on the stewardship of the Arab-Israeli peace process up until September. But what about the Israeli-PLO agreement? The administration was not slow to claim credit for what was widely viewed as a historic breakthrough, but as we have seen, this claim has little basis. The more important question is whether the United States will effectively help the Israel-PLO accord open the door to a genuine permanent settlement. Given the nature of the negotiation process agreed on by the PLO and Israel, the United States will have the ability to affect the outcome—for better or for worse. There are so many pitfalls en route to an interim arrangement, let alone the final status settlement, that the behavior of the "Only Remaining Superpower" can either facilitate or destroy the negotiations. Diplomatic skill is essential. Evenhandedness is a *sine qua non*. Will the Clinton Middle East team be up to the task?

From an Israeli point of view, the September 13 signing of the Declaration of Principles was the biggest step yet toward legitimating the Zionist venture in Palestine. Equally important, it could open the way for the establishment of full economic relations with the Arab world. From a Palestinian point of view the document looked perilously close to a surrender, but the terms could have been worse. Bowing to Israel's demands (supported by the Americans), the Palestinians deferred the "big-ticket" issues—including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, and relations and cooperation with other neighbors—to "final status" negotiations to begin two years from now. Since the 1978 Camp David negotiations, Palestinians had resisted this formula for the

understandable reason that it gave no assurances whatsoever that the weaker party might be able to negotiate even minimally satisfactory agreements on these contentious matters. Only a powerful and evenhanded third party might be able to tip the balance toward equity. The recent record suggests that the Bush-Baker administration demonstrated more promise playing this role than the Clinton-Christopher team has so far.

As for the interim phase, the ambiguities of the September 13 agreement are already causing problems: definition of the territory of the Jericho autonomous zone; release of Palestinian prisoners; the nature of Israeli military withdrawals or redeployments; and acts of violence by extremists on both sides. As the initial euphoria subsides, Israelis—and the powerful Israeli settler movement—must come to terms with some constraints on their presence in occupied territories. The right-wing Likud bloc and other parties, caught off balance by the surprise agreement, are beginning to mobilize a more effective opposition: Likud candidates won municipal elections in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in November.

Palestinians are realizing their struggle is about more than the freedom to fly the Palestinian flag and display pictures of Arafat. Opposition to the agreement permeates the entire Palestinian political spectrum, not only the Islamists but also the secular nationalists, the left, and important elements of the Fatah-dominated “mainstream.” Respected Palestinian intellectuals long committed to a peaceful, two-state solution with Israel express dismay at what they see as an undemocratically engineered capitulation to an agreement that offers the Palestinians far less than they could have had a few years ago and could still have gotten by maintaining the intifada. Moreover, by breaking its promise to negotiate in full coordination with the other Arab parties to the Madrid process, the Palestinians have given those parties ample cause to abandon future support. Arafat today is compared with Anwar Sadat, both by those who revere Sadat as a statesman and those who revile him as an opportunistic traitor to the Palestinian and Arab cause.

All of this suggests the Oslo process was less an agreement than a statement of mutual intent to try to reach an agreement according to a certain agenda. The immense burdens of actually reaching agreement on the many sensitive interim and final-stage issues fall on several Israeli-Palestinian liaison committees. These committees cannot move the Oslo process forward unless the following conditions exist: the Israeli government must be prepared to negotiate with flexibility and generosity from its undoubted position of strength; and the Palestinian authorities must quickly demonstrate political legitimacy by permitting democratic participation, and must develop administrative competence in the areas that are falling under their partial control. If the two longtime antagonists can do it alone, fine, but they will probably need a little help from their friends. The international community—especially Europe and the Nordic countries—has already lent a hand. Energetic and evenhanded American support is also essential.

In Senate testimony on November 4, Christopher reiterated that the Middle East was one of the main concerns of an administration now widely criticized for its fuzzy foreign policy agenda. The secretary of state and his lieutenants have repeatedly insisted that the United States will be “a full partner” in the Middle East peace process. This should be good news, but is it? The record so far is not very promising. As recently as December 9, the United States, for the first time in 45 years, refused to support the annual UN General Assembly resolution affirming the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Still, the administration moved vigorously to organize international development assistance for the nascent Palestinian administration. And Christopher’s visit to the region in December produced an agreement from Syria to resume peace talks with Israel and the promise of a meeting in January between Clinton and Assad. Perhaps the secretary of state had learned from his first few unimpressive months in office that he must take a more active and energetic role if the administration is to achieve genuine success on the Middle East challenges it faces. ■

Main Provisions of the Israeli-PLO Accord

- a 5-year period of limited autonomy and jurisdiction over land for Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories, beginning in the Gaza Strip and Jericho and extending to the entire West Bank in July 1994; Jewish settlements continue under Israeli control, and Israel still responsible for external security; the Palestinians and Israel are then to begin talks on a permanent settlement; status of Jerusalem to be determined in a final agreement
- Palestinian police force responsible for internal security to be created, based on Palestine Liberation Army units from outside West Bank and Gaza
- Israeli-Palestinian Liaison Committee and Israeli-Palestinian Economic Cooperation Committee to be established



Reuters/Bettman

- a Palestinian Council, elected by July 1994, will have authority over direct taxation, economic development, social welfare, education and culture, health care, environmental protection, tourism, electricity, exported and imported goods, water, and land; the Israeli military and civil administrations will be withdrawn
- withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian areas of Gaza and from Jericho, to be completed by April 13, 1994; troops to redeploy outside population centers in the West Bank before July elections; left unclear are the extent of the troop withdrawal and deployments around Jewish settlements
- disputes between Palestinians and Israel are to be settled by a joint committee or referred to arbitrators with both sides' consent
- Continuing Committee, with Jordan and Egypt asked to join Palestinians and Israel, to develop procedures for admission of Palestinians displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and their dependents; status of 1948 refugees deferred until final negotiations

Source: *The New York Times*, October 13 and 14, 1993, and December 12, 1993.

Rabin and Arafat's handshake on the White House lawn was "powerful testimony to the limits of perversity in politics. . . [B]oth the Palestinian leadership and Israel had tried and exhausted every other alternative, including stalemate, and had been left with nothing but what might be called the default option of their history."

The Israeli-Palestinian Accord: An Israeli View

BY MARK A. HELLER

In September, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization formally recognized each other and signed a Declaration of Principles on interim self-government. The declaration calls for a transitional period of no more than five years, during which final status arrangements for a lasting and comprehensive peace settlement will be negotiated. These arrangements will inevitably include the demarcation of separate national polities for the Jews and Arabs of Palestine. In short, the Israeli-PLO accord endorses, at least implicitly, the principle of partitioning the land claimed by both peoples.

The handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat on the White House lawn, which symbolized this endorsement, was not only a marvelous photo opportunity but also powerful testimony to the limits of perversity in politics. For what finally caused the logic of partition to prevail was not the potency of the logic itself, but rather that both the Palestinian leadership and Israel had tried and exhausted every other alternative, including stalemate, and had been left with nothing but what might be called the "default option" of their history.

For at least half of the hundred-year conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, neither side had any real prospect of achieving peace on its terms: the Arabs because they lacked the power to gain control of the land, the Jews because they lacked the power to secure the legitimacy of and acquiescence in the control they had gained. The only realistic way to end the conflict was, therefore, mutual recognition of national claims and acceptance of a division of the land, and this required both sides to accept if not the idea of reconciliation with the other, then at least the conclusion that a less-than-fully satisfactory solution was

preferable to the continued pursuit of maximal objectives.

The logic of partition was apparent to some of those directly involved and to most third parties who tried, in one way or another, to elaborate a formula for resolution of the conflict. The logic, however, was rejected by most Palestinians most of the time from the beginning of the Zionist enterprise in the 1880s. The Palestinian struggle against the creation and later the existence of Israel combined unilateral measures with efforts to mobilize Arab support, and encompassed terrorism (to demoralize, spark a general Arab-Israeli war, or heighten international awareness of Palestinian claims), economic boycott, political warfare (Arab and/or Soviet and/or European and/or UN pressure on the United States to pressure Israel to make concessions), and, since 1987, the intifada, or uprising, in the West Bank and Gaza, which supplemented the foregoing with active, direct resistance to Israel's military and civilian presence in the territories.

By contrast, Jewish (and after 1948, Israeli) authorities accepted the principle of partition, but what little enthusiasm the idea generated declined precipitously after Israel gained control of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967. Any residual willingness to divide the land was further tempered by the general refusal to accept the Palestinians as a legitimate national entity destined to benefit from any Israeli withdrawal. To avoid that outcome, Israel pursued a range of alternatives from de facto annexation through variants on the "Jordanian option" to negotiated or imposed autonomy. Appropriate interlocutors were sought for these alternatives, the only consistent guideline being exclusion of the PLO, primarily on the grounds that acceptance of the PLO implied acceptance of at least the minimum aspiration the organization embodied: expression of a unique Palestinian national identity through an independent state in part of the territory under Israeli control.

SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE EVOLUTION

Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, important elements in the PLO, particularly the mainstream Fatah

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faction led by Arafat, began to experiment with formulations that admitted the possibility of long-term coexistence with Israel. Movement along this path was slow, tortuously ambiguous, and marked by reversals with respect to both ends and means, but by the late 1980s Arafat, despite strong domestic opposition, felt able to espouse the objective of peace through partition and to renounce the use of terrorism in the pursuit of this goal. The remaining conceptual (as opposed to political) obstacle was Palestinian rejection of a process based on open-ended interim stages and insistence that the final status—an independent Palestinian state—be guaranteed from the outset, with only the method of implementation subject to negotiation. Even this issue seemed to have been finessed by the so-called Madrid framework of the peace negotiations that formally commenced in October 1991, although it soon became clear the resolution of this problem was far more apparent than real.

The Israeli position also evolved over time, often in ways quite inconsistent with the posture to which governments were still ostensibly committed. In the early 1970s two Labor-Alignment cabinet ministers, Aharon Yariv and Victor Shem-Tov, suggested that Israel replace its categorical refusal to deal with the PLO with a formula that would permit negotiations if the organization met stringent conditions concerning recognition of Israel, commitment to peace on the basis of UN Resolution 242, and renunciation of terrorism. (Arafat did not meet these terms until 1988.) At Camp David the Likud bloc government of Menachem Begin recognized “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements” and proposed a concept of autonomy or self-government.

Finally, the Labor government that came to power in mid-1992 began almost immediately to whittle away at the procedural constraints inherited from Likud. The law (often overlooked) prohibiting contact between Israeli citizens and members of the PLO was rescinded. The government also abandoned Likud’s strict construction of the Madrid framework by dealing with the Palestinian element of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation as a separate entity, tacitly endorsing the delegates’ intensive and overt consultation with PLO officials, permitting the participation of diaspora Palestinians in the multilateral negotiations, and eventually agreeing to the inclusion of a Jerusalem resident in the Palestinian delegation.

The political and intellectual contortions that accompanied these changes made it possible to initiate negotiations, sustain them for almost two years, and even issue periodic reports about imminent progress. But in actuality the optimism that accompanied the opening of talks quickly dissipated, and each successive round in Washington seemed to result in less promising prospects for agreement and more ill will. To some extent this may have been foreordained by a

fundamental defect in the process: that the parties had entered into it without any real commitment to its declared purpose, but were instead coerced into coming—Israel, at all, and the PLO, under the specified guidelines—by an American administration that appeared, in the unique but transient circumstances of the immediate post-cold war, post-Gulf War world, to be almost omnipotent. Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, in an unusually candid interview just after his defeat in the June 1992 elections, essentially admitted that his objective was not to reach an agreement, but rather to drag out the discussions for years in the hope that changes on the ground would eventually free Israel of the need to negotiate at all. And the PLO leadership in Tunis, though it had endorsed the Madrid guidelines, did little, apart from insisting the talks not be broken off, to impose restraints on a West Bank-Gaza delegation that seemed bent on stretching those guidelines beyond the point of indeterminacy, despite reports that attitudes in Tunis were actually more flexible than those in Orient House, the Jerusalem headquarters of the delegation.

As a result, the deadlock in Washington continued even after the installation of a new Israeli government clearly committed to progress, at least within the Madrid guidelines. The Palestinians had a very clear idea of the final status outcome they were working toward—an independent state—and their every position on interim issues was fashioned with this in mind. Israel had no such coherent positive goal; its negotiating position was shaped only by a negative objective: to ensure that an interim agreement would *not* automatically evolve into the outcome the Palestinians were seeking. This made reaching agreement on the source, scope, and extent of authority of the proposed self-governing administration difficult, since these interim questions touched directly or indirectly on many final status issues, including Jerusalem.

The procedural problem concerned the organizational interest of the PLO. The leadership in Tunis had authorized and was closely supervising negotiations in which it itself had no recognized role. Although recognition and legitimation of the PLO by Israel and the United States was a goal valued in its own right, the “separateness” of the Palestinian delegation from the PLO was a legal fiction that could be sustained during inconclusive negotiations. However, if an agreement was actually reached and implemented over several years, that same organizational constraint would be highly damaging to the PLO. If the experiment in interim self-government failed either to function at all or to produce more far-reaching gains later on, the PLO would be blamed for having ratified it, and discredited; if the interim administration succeeded, the beneficiaries would be those local Palestinians who accumulated power and authority from the day-to-day operation of government structures in the West Bank and Gaza.

For these reasons, the PLO was understandably reluctant to endorse the kind of interim agreement the Israeli government was prepared to negotiate.

This combination of obstacles virtually doomed the Madrid framework. Despite initial expectations, the change of government in Israel was not enough to produce a breakthrough, and it was clear some other change was necessary. By most accounts Rabin began moving toward this conclusion several months into his tenure, when he authorized the first back channel contacts with the PLO. He was finally convinced of the futility of the Madrid framework early last summer, after the addition to the Palestinian delegation of Faisal Husseini, a resident of Jerusalem and a prominent local personality, had failed to elicit any signs of accommodation during the tenth round of talks.

Still, the prospect of continued paralysis and even the possibility the negotiations might collapse do not entirely explain the dramatic shift that was about to occur; after all, there had been many stalemates and mini-crises in the past. What seems to have been critical here was a change in the perceived short-term costs for both sides. The Labor-led government in Israel, already beset by the threatened defection of one partner for reasons having nothing to do with the peace process, might have suffered irreparable damage if its promises to succeed in the negotiations where its Likud predecessor had failed were exposed as hollow. The PLO was vulnerable to even more daunting domestic threats; weakened by the cutoff of aid from the Persian Gulf states following its support of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the 1990–1991 Kuwait crisis, it had been forced to curtail many of its operations and was increasingly viewed as financially bankrupt and politically impotent, particularly inside the West Bank and Gaza, where Islamic elements were successfully challenging both the organization's strategy and its control of local institutions.

In fact, the growth of Islamic extremism, embodied in the Hamas movement, was a national security threat to Israel as much as a political threat to the PLO, and it was this unique confluence of circumstances that transformed stalemate into common menace and made the need for a breakthrough urgent. This took the form of a deal that had always been implicit in the Madrid framework (and was so perhaps even in the Camp David formula of 1978). In return for a procedural and symbolic concession by Israel—recognition of and agreement to negotiate with the PLO—the PLO waived, at least temporarily, its substantive demands and finally accepted what it had endorsed in principle but never actually approved after Madrid: an interim agreement that did not predetermine the final status and would defer discussion of the most contentious issues.

For Israel, a phased process is essential because it minimizes major short-term risks and concessions and preserves a safety net while the promise that a political

settlement will improve Israel's overall national welfare is tested by experience over time. Notwithstanding the absence in the Declaration of Principles of any specific references to conditionality or reversibility, it is clear that movement along the continuum from pre-negotiations to full-fledged peace will depend not only on agreement about the detailed terms of the next stage but also on the ongoing success of the test—meaning, from Israel's perspective, evidence that it is better off after each stage than it had been before. If the experiment has revealed serious problems, then transition between and even within stages, difficult in the best of circumstances, may well become impossible.

PITFALLS AHEAD

The first stage of the process—the conceptual breakthrough—culminated in the signing ceremony in Washington September 13; one month later the agreement technically went into effect. The second stage—interim self-government—involves a number of sub-phases, and it is the implementation of these that has preoccupied Israelis and Palestinians since October and will continue to do so at least until the scheduled start of final status negotiations, scheduled to begin two years after the withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho. The first subphase involved negotiations to clarify how Israel will withdraw from Gaza and the Jericho area and transfer administrative responsibilities to Palestinian authorities there, both of which were scheduled to begin December 13 and to be completed four months later. Israelis and Palestinians were also to negotiate an interim agreement stipulating the powers of a Palestinian Self-Governing Authority Council and the modalities of elections for it, set for mid-July. By then, Israeli forces are to be redeployed outside populated areas in the remainder of the West Bank and the Council will begin to exercise the executive and legislative authority specified in the Interim Agreement. At the end of the five-year interim period, the anticipated third stage of the process—final status—is scheduled to occur.

Transition from the first to the second stage is problematic for several reasons. One concerns the inherent limitations of this (or any other) Declaration of Principles. The declaration is a conceptual framework that lays down general guidelines but contains too many ambiguities and lacunae to serve as an operational plan. Its drafters, fully aware of the need to put meat on the bare bones before implementation could begin, provided for negotiations on Israeli withdrawal and on the authority, structure, and functions of the self-governing council (the Interim Agreement). Given the minimal guidance supplied by the declaration, as well as the complexity of the issues, it was clear these negotiations would not be merely pro forma. For example, the declaration called for withdrawal from "the Jericho area" without specifying precisely what that area constituted. No such confusion surrounded

the geographic contours of the Gaza Strip; the problem there stemmed from inconsistent guidelines on internal security. Since the declaration left in Israeli hands responsibility for the security of Israelis living in or traveling through the area, Israel wanted to retain some capacity there to discharge this responsibility. This meant the ongoing presence of some Israeli security forces, at least in the major concentrations of Jewish settlement, and perhaps some regular road patrol activity as well.

Indeed, discussion of the entire range of unresolved security issues—the size and strength of the Palestinian police force to be created, sanctuary for and hot pursuit of Palestinians engaged in terrorist acts, cooperation and coordination between Israeli and Palestinian security organs—was pervaded by the two sides' contradictory goals. Israel tried to maximize its operational capacity to protect Israelis in the area (even if the resulting arrangements came to resemble redeployment more than withdrawal), while the Palestinians aspired to emphasize the exclusivity of their authority. Another nub of contention was border crossing points to Jordan and Egypt; both Israel and the Palestinians could cite provisions of the Declaration of Principles that could justify their claim to control of these crossings. Finally, differences emerged over issues that had not been formally raised in the document.

The Declaration of Principles bequeathed a similar set of substantive ambiguities concerning the Interim Agreement, which is to specify the powers and responsibilities of the self-government council. While the declaration named education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism as areas in which authority would be transferred from Israel to the Palestinians, several issues were left open for negotiation. The most conspicuous of these were agriculture (with ramifications for control of land and water) and transportation (with ramifications for control of roads). Since these are not insignificant matters, it would be surprising if the negotiations over them were not difficult and even acrimonious.

A second set of problems concerns the political capacity of the decision makers to follow through. Domestic support for the accords was high on both sides immediately after the signing ceremony; indeed, it might not be an exaggeration to describe the mood as verging on euphoria. In part this was a result of misunderstanding what had been accomplished. In Israel, the accord was often referred to as a peace agreement, rather than simply as an agreement on a process that might ultimately culminate in peace. Among Palestinians, there was a widespread perception, which the leadership did not try very vigorously to dispel, that this was an agreement on Palestinian independence, rather than simply agreement on a process that might fulfill that aspiration. When the contrast between expectations and reality was brought

home by the absence of immediate change on the ground, the problems in the follow-on negotiations, and the revival of violence in the streets of the West Bank and Gaza, enthusiasm for the process began to decline.

Some degree of disillusionment was predictable, and fluctuations in the domestic mood in response to day-to-day developments are probably inevitable. The more serious challenge comes from those on both sides unalterably opposed to the entire process, either on ideological grounds (rejection of peace, rejection of territorial compromise) or because they themselves will be adversely affected in an immediate and personal sense. The major opposition elements are the Islamic fundamentalists, on the Palestinian side, and the settler movement, especially its ideological hard core, on the Israeli side. The fundamentalists—*Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*—did not feel themselves bound by the PLO's renunciation of violence; on the contrary, they indicated a determination to step up terrorism in the hope that their actions, and Israel's expected reaction, would so poison the atmosphere that the process would be abandoned almost before it had begun. Israeli settlers did not overtly adopt the same strategy, but they insisted that acts of terrorism against them during the transition between the first and second stages vindicated their argument that the agreement left them more exposed because the government had abdicated responsibility for their security in favor of Palestinians who had neither the capacity nor the intention of restraining themselves. Beyond this, there was an unspoken assumption that a successful experiment in interim self-government would facilitate a final status agreement that would either subject settlers to Palestinian authority or uproot them. As a result, they responded to terrorist acts with attacks on Palestinian passersby and organized rampages through Arab markets and neighborhoods, as well as the creation of vigilante groups. The settlers constitute no more than 3 percent of the Israeli electorate, and the ultras among them are even fewer, but their concerns and actions resonate with Israelis in the ideological hinterland on the right of the national political spectrum.

PROSPECTS FOR THE PROCESS

Substantive difficulties and domestic opposition may delay transition to the stage of interim self-government but they will almost certainly not prevent its implementation. Gaza, in particular, constitutes no real obstacle: Israel's presence there was so unrewarding that the government had long sought some partner (other than the PLO) willing to receive it, and failing that, even contemplated a unilateral withdrawal. Assuming that Jericho can be demarcated and reasonable security arrangements can be worked out, the withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho will probably take place and may even be completed on schedule. It is unlikely

that Palestinian violence will derail this subphase, or the planned transition in the rest of the West Bank three months later, since it is widely understood in Israel that reverting to the status quo ante and abandoning the process would only reward those bent on subverting it and would not alleviate the security problem in the territories (but might well exacerbate it). Barring some momentous development—such as a rejectionist victory in the Palestinian elections or a fundamentalist takeover in a neighboring Arab state, either of which would have decisive repercussions for Israeli calculus on the Palestinians as well as for Israel's domestic politics—it is likely that the transition to the second stage of interim self-government will be completed by this summer.

Less than two years after that, negotiations are scheduled to begin on final status arrangements, the matters to be discussed having been specified in the Declaration of Principles: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations with other neighbors, and other issues of common interest. All these are intrinsically subsumed by the issue of a Palestinian state, and though the substantive outcome of negotiations is neither foreordained nor even rigidly constrained, that both sides are committed to discuss these issues means that a Palestinian state is essentially what they will be negotiating. In Israel, this dynamic is generally recognized by both supporters and opponents of the agreement, and the government implicitly acknowledged it when it rescinded its longstanding refusal to deal with the PLO—even if it is politically unable to admit as much. In short, the question for Israel is not what to move to in the third stage of the peace process, but whether to move there.

The decision, of course, will not be made at once. The Declaration of Principles allows for up to three years of negotiations, and even if agreement is not reached by then, the problem will still have to be addressed in the context of whatever circumstances evolve after the formal expiration of the interim period. But the agreed-on process requires that Israel at least begin to come to grips with this issue in the spring of 1996, and Israelis may render a preliminary judgment in national elections expected sometime in the summer or fall.

That judgment will depend on two variables. The first is the course of the negotiations themselves—that is to say, on the kind of Palestinian state under discussion. An agreement that constrains the Palestinian capacity to threaten Israeli interests, minimizes the disruption entailed in changing the status or location of Jewish settlers, reassures Israeli fears with respect to refugee claims, assures vital Israeli concerns in Jerusalem, provides for Israel's basic security needs, and is implemented incrementally obviously is more likely to be acceptable than one that does none of these things. The second, equally critical, factor is the climate in

which the talks take place, which will be determined by the cumulative experience of the interim stage. Israelis will interpret this experience as they decide whether the reasons for their longstanding opposition to a Palestinian state—particularly the fear that the Palestinians will never be truly reconciled to peace with Israel and will use an independent state, with the support of the Arab world, as a platform either for launching a direct assault or at least for reviving claims on issues such as the refugees that are incompatible with Israel's existence as a Jewish state—are still valid.

In working out their collective interpretation, Israelis will look first to the Palestinians, meaning the record of the self-governing authority in terms of its stability and effectiveness, especially in reducing the dimensions of the security threat to Israelis and maintaining cooperative if not necessarily warm relations with Israel. But they will also make some judgment about the extent to which the peace process with the Palestinians has led to normalization of their relations with the larger Arab world. Elimination of the military threats and political, economic, and cultural boycotts and embargoes that have characterized Arab policies toward Israel would be the most tangible manifestation of a "peace dividend" that would justify the concessions Israelis expect to be called on to make. What complicates the process is a basic asymmetry in the quid pro quo of the bargaining structure: the Palestinians can get most of what they seek from Israel, but they can provide no more than a small part of what Israel looks for. Most of the benefits Israel anticipates can only come from the Arab states. These states are not controlled by the Palestinians, but they have consistently argued that the Palestinian issue is the heart of the problem, and that if it is properly addressed the rest will fall naturally into place. The truth of this assertion will be seen in the extent to which progress on the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations complements movement on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Though there were some encouraging early signs, much remains to be done. Of course, several Arab states—Jordan, Lebanon, and especially Syria—have their own outstanding problems with Israel, and movement on these issues will also be necessary before the realities of inter-Arab politics permit a reasonable test of Israel's "normalization" and "peace dividend" criteria with respect to final status decisions.

This complication illustrates the orchestration and sequencing problems—indeed, the vicious cycle—Israel faces in a process based on gradualism. The determination to preserve a margin of safety by limiting concessions and risks pending a credible test of the adversary's benign long-term intentions may make carrying out a credible test impossible, because it precludes redress of the adversary's most pressing

grievances and claims, which he views as a precondition for establishing peaceful relations. The alternative, however, is actions based on a leap of faith. Such leaps have rarely characterized the foreign and security policies of states, particularly states like Israel, whose history and geography imbue them with a sense of vulnerability not always appreciated by others.

Given the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles and the unlikelihood of more appealing alternatives in the future, chances are that Israel will remain committed to the agreed-on process and will pursue it with both the caution indicated by its possible risks and the determination dictated by its potential rewards. ■

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A Palestinian View of the Accord with Israel

BY RASHID KHALIDI

With the evaporation of the euphoria that surrounded the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles on September 13, the eruption of a new cycle of violence in the Israeli-occupied territories, and the appearance of manifold problems in the implementation of the agreement, it can be understood why many, including many Palestinians, view this historic accord as deeply flawed. Given that any agreement between Palestinians and Israelis, particularly one that embodied mutual recognition or direct negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had long seemed out of reach, such an assertion may seem mean-spirited. The difficulties and tensions that have arisen since September, however, are ample justification for discussing the flaws.

ASSESSING THE FLAWS

The pact fails to address directly any of the most difficult issues in dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, including the final status of borders, refugees, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, or sovereignty over the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Instead, it engages the two parties in negotiations over the terms for a five-year interim period. These talks on the nature and scope of the interim period will probably go on for at least two years, after which the much more contentious "final status issues" will be negotiated, presumably for the remainder of the five-year period.

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While there is undoubtedly a measure of wisdom in leaving the thorniest issues for a later stage, some of the major problems that have divided the Palestinian and Israeli peoples could and should have been resolved at the outset, thereby establishing a clear agreed-on basis for both the interim and the final stages. Such an approach would have had the merit of capitalizing on the popular euphoria on both sides that accompanied the initial accord, putting it to good use in sealing what would necessarily have been a tough compromise between the two parties. Instead, after the famous handshake between PLO chairman Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Washington, which some observers described as marking the beginning of a new era of peace, a series of disputatious talks commenced on the most elemental matters, such as how many Palestinian prisoners are to be released, how large the Jericho region is, and whether Israel withdraws or only redeploys its military forces stationed there and in the Gaza Strip.

However and whenever these and other, similar issues are resolved, that they have come up at all is an indication of how little had been agreed on between the two sides when they signed their agreement on the White House lawn. In fact, this accord can be described as no more than an agreement to agree. While the mere fact that any agreement has been reached is unquestionably significant, given the history of profound enmity between Israelis and Palestinians, this agreement has little or no substantive value in and of itself. Since the accord was largely a matter of mood and atmospherics, there is always the danger of a disruption of the process it initiated if the public mood changes on either or both sides—constant danger, in a conflict as volatile as this one.

Palestinians have long felt that the Israeli-American idea of an interim period (originally embodied in the 1978 Camp David formula) was designed primarily to save the Israelis from having to make hard decisions for as long as possible on the difficult issues—notably the

need to withdraw their forces from the occupied territories, to dismantle Israeli settlements, to accept Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza, and to share control of Jerusalem. And the idea of a single interim period has now been expanded into a series of interim periods.

This is not to say that difficult decisions have not already been taken. Israel has made a number of significant concessions, in accepting that the Palestinians are a people, in agreeing to negotiate directly with the PLO, and in bowing to the inevitability of some withdrawals at some time from some portion of the occupied territories—all of which Israeli governments in the past had resisted doing. The PLO has also made major concessions, dropping its insistence on full Israeli military withdrawal and full Palestinian jurisdiction over the occupied territories during the interim phase, and acquiescing in Israeli armed forces remaining in a large area of the territories for this period, while accepting postponement of the resolution of virtually all the crucial issues until a later round of negotiations.

Notwithstanding the magnitude of these concessions by both sides, instead of the September 13 accord providing for self-determination for the Palestinian people, and for the achievement of statehood, sovereignty, and an end to occupation as a matter of right, as might have been expected at the end of a grueling two-year negotiating process (and as has been considered normal in the decolonization of the hundred-odd countries of the postcolonial world since 1945), they have been launched on an extraordinary conditional procedure with no clearly defined end point. Where—or indeed if—this process will end is not now dependent on international law or the terms so far agreed to by the parties or any other relatively objective criteria. It will depend, rather, on the subjective assessment by the Israeli government in power whenever a final status agreement is negotiated as to whether the Palestinians have behaved satisfactorily during the various interim periods, and thus whether they deserve a further measure of self-determination.

THE DEAL

If the accord has so many flaws from the Palestinian perspective, then why did the PLO accept it, and why did a large majority of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories support it, at least initially?

To answer these questions it is necessary to examine briefly the role of Israel in the genesis of the accord. During the year after the government of Labor party leader Yitzhak Rabin was voted into office in June 1992, key Israeli decision makers came gradually to several realizations. The first was that it would be impossible to reach the kind of agreement Israel required with the Palestinian leadership from inside the occupied territories. Israel and the United States had chosen these leaders and imposed them on the Palestin-

ians instead of the PLO as their negotiators, as part of the preparations for the Madrid Middle East peace conference of October 1991. But much as they would have liked to bypass the PLO, Israeli officials needed a strong authority with a high degree of legitimacy to accept the terms they were insisting on. These provided for only a partial Israeli military withdrawal from the occupied territories and for very restricted Palestinian jurisdiction over the territory Israel was to give up during the interim period. By mid-1993 the Palestinian leadership of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip had amply demonstrated that it was unlikely to be capable of running an interim regime by itself, that it had little popular support independent of the PLO, and that on its own it was unable or unwilling to accept such restrictive Israeli terms.

The second realization flowed from the first—that the PLO was the only party that might be able to form a strong regime capable of controlling the situation in the occupied territories in the manner required by Israel's sweeping security requirements. This meant Israel's abandoning its original hope that a newly raised Palestinian police force under the supervision of a Palestinian interim authority could maintain public order in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after an Israeli withdrawal. On examination, it is hard to understand the basis for the initial Israeli belief that such a force, composed of fresh recruits, with no political legitimacy, could maintain order in the refugee camps and in the towns and cities of the occupied territories, when the Israeli army had been unable to do so for the past 26 years. But eventually Israeli leaders admitted to themselves that only the PLO could provide the police force, because the PLO alone had the thousands of trained military cadres needed to staff the security forces of the interim authority and the legitimacy that would permit it to do sometimes unpopular things.

At the same time, the Israeli leadership realized that if the Palestinians were to be obliged to accept conditions that effectively guaranteed they would not have full jurisdiction and control over much of the occupied territories for an indeterminate time while simultaneously being expected to carry out security tasks on behalf of Israel, some countervailing concession was necessary. This led Rabin in mid-1993 to authorize the Israeli emissaries who, with his knowledge and consent, had been engaged for many months in secret contacts with PLO officials through a variety of channels, to begin serious negotiations with their Palestinian counterparts, with a view to a formal, public agreement between Israel and the PLO.

In dealing directly with the PLO, the Israelis were undoubtedly doing the Palestinians, and the organization in particular, a major favor. However, as we have seen, they had already decided that in security terms they would be doing themselves an even bigger favor. Ultimately the secret "Oslo channel" between the PLO

and Israel, opened the previous January with the assistance of Norwegian diplomats, was the avenue for the Declaration of Principles initialed in private in Oslo August 18 and signed with much fanfare in Washington September 13. However, several parallel secret and semisecret back channels between the two sides had been opened by this time, and indeed at least two of them contributed major elements to the final text of the accord, as did the ten rounds of formal negotiations at the State Department in Washington between November 1991 and June 1993.¹

WHY ACCEPT IT?

Why the Palestinians accepted the accord is still hard to explain. Many of the Israeli concessions had already been offered to the Palestinian delegation formally or informally during the Washington negotiations, and indeed many of the Palestinian negotiators at those talks were convinced that in a number of spheres, such as the economic portion of the accord, they could have obtained better terms than the PLO team in Oslo did. But the decisive elements were elsewhere for PLO leaders.

The two crucial ones were the PLO's reading of Palestinian public opinion, and the profound importance in the organization's eyes of Israel's being willing to negotiate openly with it, and to accept the introduction into the West Bank and Gaza of a considerable security force drawn in large part from existing PLO military units and therefore ultimately loyal to them. It is clear from the care with which some security aspects of the agreement were drafted that this was a sphere the PLO leadership considered of paramount significance. By contrast, other sections are sloppily drafted, give away to the Israelis things they probably did not have a vital interest in, and show signs of being an afterthought, by the Palestinian side at least. Put more simply, while the PLO's leaders clearly care a great deal about recognition and security matters, they apparently are not as concerned about economics or several other aspects of this agreement. Being recognized as representatives of the Palestinian people by their main adversaries—Israel and the United States—and ensuring that personnel loyal to them would play a key role in

security arrangements for the interim regime in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were clearly the crucial elements in winning the PLO leadership's assent to the agreement, outweighing many other factors.

As far as Palestinian public opinion was concerned, the PLO leadership accurately read the temper of the majority in the occupied territories, although it failed to assess correctly the mood of many in the Palestinian diaspora communities where the PLO has always been based, and where opposition to the accord has been strong. This opposition is largely due to the fact that the September 13 accord not only fails to mention the fate of Palestinians made refugees in 1948 and their descendants, but defers any discussion of this vital matter for at least two years. The Palestinian populations in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and other parts of the diaspora, mainly composed of 1948 refugees and their descendants, thus had little to gain from the accord. Many among them were understandably bitter, particularly Palestinians in Lebanon, who had suffered so much and sacrificed for so long.

Palestinians of the occupied territories, on the other hand, in the years preceding the accord, had come to feel an abiding weariness, a sense of exhaustion, and consequently were more willing to accept concessions to Israel even on key issues if this would bring about transformation in a status quo increasingly seen as intolerable. The exhaustion was a function of the wholesale political and social attrition resulting from over a quarter-century of Israeli military occupation, and more immediately from the success of the Israeli security forces in overwhelming the intifada with massive and unrelenting repression during the years after the Palestinian popular uprising broke out in December 1987.

One of the main points of debate among Palestinians in recent months has been whether the institutions and leaders of the PLO in fact performed as well as they might have in this extremely difficult situation. Before the accord was announced, indeed, there had been marked dissension within the organization's top ranks, with leading Executive Committee members Mahmud Darwish and Shafiq al-Hout resigning from that body in protest. They were among those who argued that there had been serious failures of leadership in terms of the lack of popular mobilization and the conduct of the negotiations with the Israelis, as well as wholesale corruption and malfeasance, a lack of democracy, and an absence of collective decision making. Others responded that the PLO and the Palestinians had simply come up against superior force, and that their weak negotiating position was mainly due to this rather than to the performance of PLO leaders.

Another reason for the weariness of the population of the occupied territories was the almost complete cutoff of Arab funds to the PLO and to nearly all

¹Among the elements of the final accord that were the result of the Washington negotiations were Israel's acceptance of the principle that in the interim phase there would be a centralized Palestinian authority that would emerge from general elections and would have legislative powers and a strong police force; that there would be interlock between the interim and final stages; and that the occupied territories form an integral whole. All these marked changes from the position held by the Likud government, and were not modified initially by the new Labor government. The security aspects of the Oslo accord were also largely agreed to elsewhere via private back channels, and then incorporated into the Declaration of Principles.

Palestinian social, educational, medical, and cultural institutions in the area since late 1991, amounting to a financial siege, which had taken an awful toll on Palestinian society. This cutoff was largely the result of the enduring anger of the Arab regimes of the Persian Gulf at the PLO's failure to dissociate itself from Iraq during the Gulf War (which was itself another topic of fierce *ex post facto* debate among Palestinians). The siege's comprehensiveness and its significance, however, flowed from the fact that it was finely orchestrated by United States policymakers as part of a strategy designed to weaken and ultimately eliminate the PLO as a player in the negotiating process.

THE UNITED STATES ROLE

Ironically, one of the primary results of United States policy aimed against the PLO was to propel the PLO back into the center of events, by obliging it to accept concessions it might otherwise have resisted. This was exactly the opposite of what American officials intended, which is but one indication of just how out of touch they were on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The situation worsened after the Bush administration gave way to that of President Bill Clinton, for though many of the personnel in charge of Middle Eastern policy remained the same, much in American policy toward the peace process changed with the transition.

The Bush administration—which for these purposes meant Secretary of State James Baker 3d and a few of his closest aides—had given little more than nine or ten months of concentrated attention to this process, mostly in the leadup to and immediate aftermath of the Madrid peace conference in October 1991. Nevertheless, an accord on United States terms, as these were codified in the Madrid ground rules excluding the PLO from direct participation in the negotiations and putting the Palestinians in a joint delegation with Jordan, might have been possible had Baker managed to sustain his level of involvement beyond November 1991. But during the following twelve months the secretary of state was distracted by the collapse of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's regime, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and finally by the collapse of the Bush administration.

The result of the effective disappearance of the architect of the entire process nearly a year before George Bush lost the 1992 elections was that United States Middle Eastern policy drifted, and the negotiations eventually stalled. In January 1993, after Clinton's election, a new policymaking team came in, keeping in place a number of key personnel but replacing some of the most knowledgeable members, both in Washington and in posts in the Middle East. The end result was that a bad situation got worse, and talks that had shown little progress became mired in acrimony, which now included the parties' expectations of the United States role.

This was highlighted during the two direct interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations undertaken by State Department officials during the rounds of talks held in Washington last May and June. In attempts to break the increasingly rigid deadlock between the two sides, American officials presented the parties in the first instance with a draft joint statement, and in the second with a draft Declaration of Principles. These documents were so poorly drafted and so insensitive to Palestinian concerns that most on the Palestinian side despaired from that point onward of the entire negotiating process based on the Madrid formula. In both documents the authors bent over backward to favor the Israelis, to the point that they failed to incorporate a number of concessions the Israelis themselves had already indicated to the Palestinian side they were willing to make; at the same time, as they carefully restated virtually every basic point the Israelis had raised in the talks they failed to address satisfactorily a number of vital Palestinian concerns.

The Israelis were no happier than the Palestinians with this outcome, for by this point the Rabin government had come to the realization that in view of Israeli domestic considerations a breakthrough was essential on one of the four negotiating fronts with Arab parties, and that the Palestinian one was the most suitable. Many Israeli officials were therefore deeply disappointed with the documents the United States produced in May and June. In this Israeli view, the American initiative failed to serve the purpose of United States involvement in the negotiations—to bridge the gaps between the two sides—since the Americans were too close to the Israeli position, and indeed were considerably less flexible than the Israelis in some respects. Far from being bridging documents, these two texts represented an American view of what Israel would or would not accept that was closer to the position of the opposition Likud bloc than to that of the current Labor-dominated government.

For some Israeli officials, as for many Palestinians, this American intervention was the last straw. Thus it was that, in a Rube Goldberg-like fashion, these ill-fated American interventions helped push Israel and the PLO toward direct negotiations with one another. The irony here was that this group of United States policymakers had spent much of their careers opposing any role for the PLO in a Middle Eastern peace process. And it is beyond irony that in the wake of the signing of the accord some of these officials actually went so far as to take credit for it.

The question of why the United States played such an equivocal role can be left to future historians. Certainly the extreme weakness of the Palestinian position from 1991 onward left many American officials with the impression that they could ignore the Palestinians and the PLO, who in the end would be forced to accept whatever they and the Israelis thought

fit; they forgot both that the Palestinians retained the ability to take the initiative and that the Israeli government had its own reading of what the Palestinians would accept and its own ideas on what Israel required from a settlement. These American officials apparently assumed they could dictate to both the Palestinians and Israel, since they knew better than the parties did what was good for them.

The lessons of the performance of the United States in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations until September should be apparent. If these tendencies continue, a prospective Syrian-Israeli accord, which would benefit from sensitive American brokering, is in jeopardy, and with it the framework for a comprehensive regional peace settlement, which seems within reach. The United States could still play a positive role in the complex interim and final status negotiations to come between the PLO and Israel, in addition to those between Israel and Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. If past form is any indication, however, it will probably be the Middle Eastern parties themselves that will either agree with one another or fail to do so, and the best that can be hoped of the United States is that it will not interfere too heavily and with too negative an effect.

All this would seem to run counter to the conventional wisdom, largely generated by former American policymakers, that the United States has to be involved for peace agreements between the parties to be possible in the Middle East. In fact, it conforms to another piece of conventional wisdom, which is that external actors, the United States included, can only have a positive effect when the parties to the dispute themselves are ready for an agreement. There is evidence that this is now the case in the Arab-Israeli conflict: the process that began at Madrid in 1991 is still proceeding, with all the original parties participating (and the addition

of the PLO), in spite of all the obstacles, and Palestinians and Israelis, and Jordanians and Israelis, have already managed to come to some agreements, however partial and incomplete.

The flaws in the September 13 Israeli-Palestinian agreement that have been outlined should be of concern to more than just the Palestinians themselves. If because of these flaws, or for any other reasons, the accord breaks down, this will have a major negative impact on Israel and on the prospects for resolution of the conflicts between Israel and the remaining Arab states. But in any case, the heaviest burdens resulting from the implementation of the accord, as from its failure, will now fall on the Palestinian people themselves.

The Palestinians are obliged to make an agreement negotiated by their leadership in the strictest secrecy work under the most difficult of conditions, with the terms of the interim arrangements still being negotiated even as some of them are being carried out. More important perhaps than the outcome of the ongoing negotiations with Israel, the fate of the accord, and of the Palestinian people, now depends largely on the ability of their institutions to provide representative, democratic government; efficient public services; and rapid, sustainable economic growth that benefits the largest possible number of people. This would be a daunting task for institutions rich in trained personnel and experienced in governance and in running an economy under an agreed-on rule of law. Unfortunately, neither the PLO nor the institutions in the occupied territories have much relevant prior experience in these areas. For better or for worse, however, at this stage there appears to be for the Palestinians little alternative to attempting to make the best of a bad deal. ■

"Gaza's future will depend on the degree to which the structural asymmetries between Israel and the occupied territories are reversed, political and economic relations with other countries are established, and Palestinian sovereignty is made possible. For Gazans, these will occur only if the army is completely withdrawn, Israeli settlements are removed, and Gazans are given full control over their own resources, especially land and water. . . None of these measures appears in the Gaza-Jericho accord."

The Gaza Strip: Past, Present, and Future

BY SARA ROY

In the 45 years since it became an internationally recognized entity, the Gaza Strip has been called "the forgotten man of the Middle East," "the stepchild of the West Bank," "the black hole of the Arab world," and "Israel's collective punishment." Since its creation this tiny artificial entity has known only one political reality—occupation. The Gaza Strip is the only part of Mandatory Palestine never incorporated into a sovereign state, and no Arab nation has ever claimed it as its own. Yet Gaza has played a critical part in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: Gaza was where the All-Palestine Government was established in 1948, where the Palestinian uprising ("intifada") started in 1987, and where limited self-rule for the occupied territories will begin.

The Gaza Strip is an area of extreme, almost impenetrable demographic, economic, social, political, and legal complexity. It has one of the highest population densities in the world; over two-thirds of the people who live there are refugees and nearly half are younger than 14. The economy is weak and underdeveloped. Within days of Gaza's creation in 1948, the social structure of the area was irrevocably altered when an influx of 250,000 refugees fleeing the war in Palestine tripled the population almost overnight. Politically and legally the territory has been under Israeli military occupation since the 1967 Six Day War (and was under Egyptian occupation before then). All forms of political activity are prohibited and the law is defined by more than 1,000 military orders; no one carries a passport, everyone is stateless; and no one under 50 years old can leave without permission from the Israeli military authorities.

Despite the unique complexity of Gaza, the Strip's extremely small size, weak political culture, and historical obscurity in modern times have led both Arab and non-Arab scholars to treat it as an analytical appendage of the much larger and more widely studied West Bank. But Gaza, perhaps more than any of the other territories occupied by Israel, is a stark clarification of the intentions of Israeli policy, as well as its impact. Given the latest breakthrough in Palestinian-Israeli relations, with Israel and the PLO agreeing to implement partial autonomy in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank town of Jericho, an understanding of Gaza becomes critically important.

GEOGRAPHY AS DESTINY

The Gaza Strip is a roughly rectangular coastal area on the eastern Mediterranean, approximately 28 miles long and 5 miles wide (140 square miles in all), that is wedged in by the larger and more powerful Israel to the north and east and Egypt to the south. The visitor to Gaza is first struck by the dramatic juxtaposition of a serene Mediterranean coastline with teeming poverty and squalor. The Strip appears to be sand rather than soil, yet the gray desert is punctuated throughout by pockets of lush green vegetation; the area's seeming barrenness belies remarkable fecundity.

Our earliest knowledge of Gaza is as a Canaanite city-state dating from 3200 B.C., which makes it one of the oldest cities in the world. The city and its environs have a remarkable history of resilience and growth in the face of conquest and occupation, although their present debilitation seems to go against this. Gaza has experienced a continuous succession of conquerors and occupiers, beginning with the pharaohs and ending with the Israeli army. The city has been attacked and destroyed, and its population enslaved and expelled, by Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Scythians, Babylonians, Persians, Romans, Muslims, Crusad-

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ers, Mamelukes, Ottomans, the British, and Israelis—all struggling for control of this strategic strip of land.

Gaza was of crucial importance to ancient conquerors attempting to invade Egypt from the north or Palestine from the south. Situated on the Via Maris, a road running from Egypt along the coast of Palestine and Phoenicia with a branch leading eastward to Damascus and Mesopotamia, Gaza served as a critical commercial link between Egypt and other ancient empires. Considered the southern counterpart of Damascus, Gaza was the key commercial outpost and provisioning center for caravans traveling between Asia and Africa. Whoever controlled Gaza, therefore, could shape the nature of interregional trade.

In modern times, before 1948, the Strip was not formally demarcated but existed as part of the southern district of Mandatory Palestine. The declaration of Israeli statehood May 15, 1948, precipitated not only the birth of the Gaza Strip but also Gaza's defining social and economic feature: the Palestinian refugee problem.

PORTRAIT OF A SMALL WORLD

The Gaza Strip is home today to about 830,000 people, 99 percent of whom are Sunni Muslim Arabs. About 74 percent of Gazans—more than 600,000 people—are refugees of the 1948 war or their descendants. Over half of these still live in camps. The remainder reside in villages and the Strip's 13 cities and towns, the five largest of which are Gaza City, Khan Yunus, Rafah, Jabalya, and Deir el-Balah. The annual population growth rate in Gaza is 4 percent, one of the highest in the developing world.

When calculated on the basis of Arab-owned land alone, Gaza's population density exceeds 12,000 people per square mile, which surpasses that of many major American cities. The densities in the refugee camps are far higher: Jabalya, the largest camp, has the equivalent of 133,400 people per square mile, over twice that of the island of Manhattan. Population density in Israel, by contrast, is 80 people per square mile (this is for total land area; when accounting for agricultural lands only, the figure rises to 868).

Since 1967, settlement patterns have been shaped to a significant extent by Israeli government policy. The government has directly confiscated or otherwise assumed control of at least 50 percent of Gaza's land—some government officials have estimated 58 percent—large portions of which have been allocated for the establishment of Jewish settlements spread along the length of Gaza's coastline. Although Israeli settlers comprise one-half of 1 percent of the territory's population, they are allotted, per capita, 84 times the acreage allotted Palestinians, and they consume close to 16 times the amount of water.¹

Economically, Palestinians have also been constrained by Israeli policy. Before 1967, Gaza's economy was, as it is today, weak and underdeveloped despite some limited growth and sectoral expansion. The occupation brought the Strip's small and unorganized economy into direct contact with Israel's highly industrialized economy. Since 1967, the most significant change in the Gazan economy has been the employment of Gaza labor inside Israel. Between 1970 and 1987, the number of Gazans traveling to work in Israel grew from 10 percent of the total labor force to well over 60 percent. Wages earned in Israel stimulated domestic economic growth and improved Gaza's gross national product, especially in the first decade of occupation, since demand generated by Palestinian workers in Israel increased consumption and trade. However, increases in GNP, which were largely attributable to external payments in the form of salaries earned in Israel and foreign remittances, fostered extreme economic dependence, on Israel in particular, at the cost of internal economic development—something the Israeli authorities deliberately and actively restricted. Contributing only 2 percent to GNP in 1968, external payments increased to almost 50 percent of GNP in 1987, revealing the weakness of Gaza's internal economy and the lack of structural growth.

Indeed, the economic growth that did take place in Gaza in the early years of the occupation was predicated on the absence of transforming agriculture and industry, which would have allowed the local economy to achieve some modicum of independence from Israel. Services continued to dominate economic activity, followed by agriculture, itself dominated by the production of one crop—citrus, Gaza's principal export. Industry, the backbone of economic development, remained weak, unsophisticated, and traditional, and continued to account for the smallest share of GDP. The trade deficit mushroomed, especially with Israel. By 1993 Gaza's economy accounted for only 1 percent of Israel's GNP.

Gaza's weakened economy deteriorated rapidly under the combined impact of the intifada and the fallout over Palestinian support of Iraq during the Persian Gulf War. Between December 1987 and January 1991, the month the Gulf War began, Gaza's GNP dropped by at least 30 percent. This fall resulted from a marked decline in output, a significant reduction in trade with Israel, a dramatic loss in income earned in Israel due to Israeli restrictions barring workers, and a serious drop in remittances. The loss of income from work in Israel and remittances proved extremely damaging. The number of Gazans employed in Israel declined from 80,000 before the uprising to 30,000 after the Gulf War. Given Gaza's debilitated economy, these jobs could not be recreated domestically. This represented a loss approaching \$300 million. By April 1991 the termination of remittances from Palestinians who had lived in the Gulf, direct aid from the Gulf states, and exports

¹See Peace Now, *The Real Map: A Demographic and Geographic Analysis of the Population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Jerusalem: Peace Now, November 1992).

amounted to an additional loss of \$350 million. Losses to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the form of canceled direct aid from the Gulf—a large percentage of which would have been channeled to Gaza and the West Bank—were estimated at \$480 million. A series of curfews and closures imposed by the Israeli authorities during and after the Gulf crisis added another \$40 million to \$50 million in losses for the Gazan economy.

The March 1993 closure, the longest ever imposed by the Israeli government, still continues, and its effect has been devastating. The number of Gazans allowed into Israel to work fell to zero in April and rose to 20,000 by September, where it has remained. In the first two months of the closure, the Gaza Strip was deprived of \$750,000 a day in wages alone. Monthly losses continue to exceed \$8 million and unemployment stands at 55 percent. Purchasing power has declined precipitously, consumption patterns have changed dramatically, and the overwhelming majority of Gazans have required some form of emergency food assistance. At present an unprecedented number of people do not have enough food to eat; the

resulting malnourishment has been most harmful for children under three years old. And the closure has created two fresh difficulties for Gaza's economy: a new cadre of permanently unemployed, and a growing dependence on credit combined with new levels of indebtedness. Gaza, which at present has virtually no economic base to speak of, can hardly begin to address any of these problems.

As for Gazan society, the inhabitants of the area historically could be divided into three groups: urban, peasant, and bedouin. Today the people of the Gaza Strip fall into a variety of intricate and cross-cutting categories that confound as much as they clarify. Foremost is the division between refugees and indigenous Gazans.

The majority of Gaza's refugees live in eight squalid

and overflowing camps on sites first claimed by their forefathers in 1948. The organizational and social basis of camp life is the pre-1948 village of origin. When the refugees left their homes and fled to Gaza in 1948, whole villages, particularly in the coastal areas to the north, were uprooted and transplanted to the Strip. Refugees remained with their relatives and townsmen. As a result, even today, the camps are divided into district quarters, each with its own *mukhtar*, or leader, which preserve the original village framework. Refugees in the camps, even the youngest among them, identify themselves as members of villages that most have never seen but that they can nonetheless describe in meticulous detail. Even those who live outside the camps feel muted allegiance to or identification with the Gaza Strip, despite steady interaction and integration. To be

a refugee, therefore, involves much more than the political status; it is an intimate and indivisible expression of self.

Alongside the refugee community live the indigenous Gazans, distinguished by their lineage and by their power, which to a limited degree expresses itself politically. The relationship between indigenous inhabitants, especially the rich, and the

refugee community has often been strained, even hostile. Disparate social backgrounds and economic conditions and conflicting political agendas have fueled tensions from the first refugees' arrival right up to the present.

While group of origin is a major divider in Gazan society, social class is less significant. The economic dislocations in 1948 and 1967 wrought social dislocation that affected all Gazans, though the poor suffered much more than the wealthy. Moreover, the distortion of Gaza's economy—particularly after the Israeli occupation, when large numbers of Gazans headed to Israel to work—prevented the emergence and delineation of well-defined social classes. Nonetheless, certain class divisions exist. The small and wealthy upper class is composed of Gaza's traditional landed aristocracy, and



of capitalist farmers and large merchants; its most prominent members are primarily from landowning families who have historically depended on export trade for their income. There is a tiny middle class made up of entrepreneurs and professionals such as engineers, teachers, and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) administrative staff. Then there are small and tenant farmers and peasants producing for profit and subsistence; and a working class drawn mainly from the marginalized refugee population.

THE PERSONAL BECOMES POLITICAL

Perhaps the most dramatic development in the social structure of Gaza since 1967 has been the formation of political alliances—if loose ones—across classes totally isolated from each other before then. Israel's occupation forged alliances that were based almost exclusively on nationalist politics, in a common stand against the political and economic ramifications of the occupation. However, in Gaza, these alliances, which contributed to a kind of social cohesion, were largely unable to breach the economic isolation of social classes, since the occupation affected each of these groups differently.

The intifada, however, introduced changes that for the first time blurred class distinctions. The political imperatives of the uprising, as well as the mass-based nature of its organization, devalued and submerged distinctions based on class. Without question, two of the most important achievements of the intifada were the consolidation and unification of social classes and political factions behind common national objectives, and the creation of an institutional structure to support and sustain popular unity. Opprobrious economic pressures, which in the early years of the uprising served to unite the population against Israeli policy, combined with the consistent absence of political progress, have taken their toll in the form of new class distinctions, increased political factionalism, and violence between factions. As Gazans become more and more impoverished, class divisions in particular have reemerged along new lines, separating those who have some income and those with none at all. The latter group has never been larger.

The most important form of organization in the Gaza Strip today may be political affiliation. Political divisions are perhaps the most pronounced and deeply felt, and they cut across class distinctions in surprising ways. Everyone in the Gaza Strip is a political being. Politics directly and immediately influences daily life; every action, no matter how banal, has political significance. Consequently politics transcends party membership or ideological conviction and assumes a deeply personal, almost primordial dimension that molds an individual's world view and philosophy and guides his or her actions.

Currently there are at least seven political factions

and subfactions claiming the allegiance of Gaza's highly politicized population, with almost every Palestinian in the Strip claiming membership in one or more of them. The seven are: Fatah; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP); the Communists, now known as the People's party; Hamas, otherwise known as the Islamic Resistance Movement; Islamic Jihad; and Hezbollah. The primary distinction among the factions is their position on the Israeli occupation. The first four, which come under the umbrella of the PLO, espouse a secular and democratic ideology. The last three are religious and "Islamic," and remain distinctly outside the PLO. The division between the two blocs is fraught with tension, most clearly expressed in the consistent conflict between Fatah and Hamas, especially in Gaza.

Of the PLO factions, Fatah, which is the most centrist and moderate, appears to have retained the greatest support, despite considerable waxing and waning. Of the three parties of the religious right, Hamas is the largest and most popular. Islamic Jihad is next in terms of strength and popularity, and Hezbollah has but a tiny presence. Islamism is far stronger in Gaza than in the West Bank. Despite its limited ideological appeal, Islamism's combination of religion with a clear political agenda has turned Hamas and the Islamic Jihad into increasingly compelling alternatives to secular nationalist groups. There is no doubt that under present conditions their strength will grow, following a pattern seen in other parts of the Arab world, for many of the same reasons. While Islamism's strength is rooted in the territory's extreme poverty and isolation, its growth has been nourished by a profound sense of popular despair over the steady disintegration of daily life and the consistent failure of the nationalist movement to achieve political resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and an end to occupation—the Israeli-Palestinian accord notwithstanding.

In the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, as repression heightened in Gaza, Hamas adopted more violent tactics. This change in Hamas's strategy, if not its policy, represented not only an attempt to increase support for the organization in its ongoing leadership struggle with the nationalist forces, but a response to the growing influence of the more militant and violent Islamic Jihad. With the inception of the Middle East peace process in October 1991, factional violence between Hamas, which opposed the initiative, and Fatah increased markedly. The Labor party's victory in the 1992 Israeli elections only fueled the interfactional fire, since peace prospects suddenly seemed greater. The September signing of the Israeli-PLO accord, which Hamas rejects, has intensified differences with Fatah and led to greater violence. Also significant is the opposition of the PFLP, DFLP, and most recently, the People's party, to the pact; this may cause serious and possibly irreversible fractures within the PLO.

UNRAVELING SOCIETY

The combination of severe economic deterioration, gross insecurity, rapidly eroding living conditions, and continued political uncertainty has introduced dynamics that now threaten civil society in Gaza. Most critical are the breakdown of authority structures, especially the family and the school; increased political factionalization; the breakdown and subsequent politicization of institutions as factions vie for institutional control; the loss of leadership at all levels of society; the trauma inflicted on the young by six years of the intifada; and the growing psychological divide between the populations of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Taken together, these factors have created a situation in which political interests are pursued at the cost of community cohesion, economic development, and social consensus. Production has given way to survival, unity to disintegration. Indeed, increasing violence *within* Fatah is indicative of Gaza's incipient dissolution. The result has been widening divisions in society and internal fragmentation. The creation of structures, once a critical feature of the intifada, has given way to the creation of constituencies, often in institutional guise.

The unmaking of Gazan civil society poses a difficulty for the creation of a viable autonomous entity in the Gaza Strip that should not be underestimated. The Gaza-Jericho accord may address the problem, but the agreement did not arise in response to nor was it informed by deteriorating conditions on the ground. Gaza's future will depend on the degree to which the structural asymmetries between Israel and the occupied territories are reversed, political and economic relations with other countries are established, and Palestinian sovereignty is made possible. For Gazans, these will occur only if the army is completely withdrawn, Israeli settlements are removed, and Gazans are given full control over their own resources, especially land and water.

None of these measures appears in the Gaza-Jericho accord. Indeed, that Israel has control over Gaza's key economic resources and foreign policy is not the only problem; the very fact this control is being retained makes the preclusion of Palestinian statehood possible. The accord as it stands will not alter the underlying relationship between occupier and occupied, only its form. Israeli rule may be less direct, but it

will be no less powerful. The ultimate solution for Gaza is not simply a matter of giving Palestinians greater control within a system of constrained power; key constraints must be removed altogether.

A recent trip to the territory revealed shifts in popular thinking since September 13. First, the initial euphoria has completely dissipated. With the euphoria (itself largely generated by the prospect of the army's withdrawal) gone and the continued absence of change, Gazans are beginning to confront the specifics of the accord critically, as they had not done before. And they do not like what they see. Support for PLO chairman Yasir Arafat, which was at its nadir before the September signing, is plummeting again, even in Fatah and especially among the younger guard there. Gazans are weary of and concerned with the PLO's ability to establish a democratic, pluralist system in which they can directly participate. A young activist warned, "We will not tolerate a new occupation, especially by our own people. We will die before we allow this to happen." Arafat's recent appointment of a 13-member council to administer Gaza is composed and headed by Gaza's older Fatah loyalists. The younger guard—the intifada activists with a strong grassroots following—are excluded. They have not been given a voice in administration and decision making. Arafat's perceived attempt to marginalize the young will intensify growing intra-Fatah schisms and the potential for civil war.

Distrust of Israel is a given; distrust of the PLO soon will be. Increasingly, there is a sense that Arafat is allowing Israel to normalize and legitimize the occupation. Increasingly, the continued presence of Israeli settlements in Gaza is seen as proof of this. Left unaddressed, these perceptions will only speed the disintegration already under way.

Since September 13 the consensus has been that political and economic reform must be implemented quickly or necessary momentum will be lost. However, Gaza's viability over the longer run and the prospects for a lasting peace will not turn on the number of reforms implemented but on the terms on which they are implemented. That is, will Gaza have full control over land or will Israel use land to control Gaza? Will the PLO support real change or participate in perpetuating the status quo, only with itself in charge? The answers to these and many other questions will decide Gaza's survival. And Gazans know it. ■

"In biblical times, the Israelites entered Palestine through Jericho, and with this event Jericho entered the Bible story. In modern times, Jericho may very well be the gateway through which the Palestinians will enter into their independent domain. Should this happen, Jericho will be the first chapter in what many hope will be enduring Israeli-Palestinian peace."

Jericho and Its Meaning: A New Strategy for the Palestinians

BY MUHAMMAD MUSLIH

A West Bank Palestinian, answering a reporter's questions, expressed his feelings about the Israeli-PLO agreement of September 13, 1993, this way: "We Palestinians are like someone who has lost his house and belongings and has been given a corner in the backyard. We lost Palestine in 1948. That was bad. Yet we Arabs are worse off now than we were in 1948. It is my guess that we will be worse off in 1998 than we are today. So I will accept a tiny corner in the backyard of my lost house." When asked about those who opposed the accord, the unnamed Palestinian paused for a moment and said, "Well, go talk to them, they will probably preach to you about liberation and the need to reform the PLO. Let them dream for as long as they wish. Who told them that a reformed PLO will liberate Palestine?"

This man's response says something about the idealism of Palestinian rejectionists, but much more about those who support the accord. According to published estimates, about 65 percent of the Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip were in favor of the agreement when it was signed in Washington. The Palestinian's statement depicts PLO chairman Yasir Arafat as a realist who sees the inadequacies of a fragmented Arab world and understands their implications for Palestinians; Arafat is a rational man, a player who knows the rules of the game of nations. Arafat's opponents, in contrast, are depicted as dreamers who have not come to terms with the painful realities that emerged after the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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Two complementary visions have dominated Palestinian politics since 1967: the vision of political independence in a Palestinian homeland, and that of the establishment of a democratic order in the hoped-for homeland. The first proposed the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, living in peace alongside Israel. The second embodied the preferences of an uprooted society that has been experimenting since 1948 with institution building, with democratic ideas, with self-reliance, and with armed struggle and diplomacy. The PLO's Palestine National Council opted for the first vision implicitly in the 1970s and explicitly in the latter 1980s.

The delineation of the homeland was a territorial compromise on the part of the PLO, and it was a large one. Mandatory Palestine covered 10,435 square miles, and the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, represent less than a quarter of that territory. And between 1967 and now Israel has taken at least 50 percent of the total area of the West Bank.

THE WEST BANK AS IT STANDS

The West Bank and Gaza Strip fell to Israeli occupation in June 1967. The two territories have a combined land area of about 2,300 square miles, slightly larger than the state of Delaware; among Middle Eastern countries the only one with a smaller area is Bahrain. Approximately 36 percent of the West Bank is cultivable, 32 percent is grazing land, 27 percent is desert or rocky areas, and 5 percent is natural forest.

East Jerusalem is of particular significance for the people of the West Bank and Palestinians in general. Israel annexed this Arab side of the city, which was under Jordanian control in 1967. Although Palestinians living in East Jerusalem were free from some of the constraints imposed on the West Bank and Gaza by the Israeli military government, they were deprived of many of the rights enjoyed by Israeli Jews. In addition,

Israel surrounded East Jerusalem with a ring of Jewish settlements. The West Bank at East Jerusalem resembles the middle of a reversed letter B, and without the city the Mount Nablus area to the north and the Mount Hebron area to the south would have only a narrow corridor connecting them with one another. The West Bank's tourism potential is linked to a physical connection with the religious sites of East Jerusalem. Also, the city houses the financial, trade, and cultural infrastructure of the West Bank, including the power systems serving the areas from Ramallah in the north to Bethlehem in the south.

In an Arab Islamic context, no Arab or Muslim leader would be worth his soul if he were to acquiesce to Israel's retention of East Jerusalem. The city is as central to Islam and Christianity as it is to Judaism. Thus one cannot realistically envision a durable peace without the settlement of the question of East Jerusalem—a question that has as much to do with the viability of a Palestinian entity as it has to do with Israel's interest in being accepted as a legitimate state by a region whose peoples share a culture and world view predominantly Arab-Muslim in nature.

The estimated population of the West Bank is 1.6 million. Projections for the year 2010 put the population at 2.3 million people, making the West Bank (and Gaza also) among the fastest growing areas in the world. Fifty percent of the people of the West Bank and 60 percent of Gazans are under age 15. Nearly two-thirds of the total population are males.

The essence of social organization is a network of *hamulas* (extended families) and smaller families, as well as village, neighborhood, and religious solidari-

ties. Palestinian society has a mainly rural character, and even urban centers are closer to the model of small towns than to that of large cities. In the West Bank, 65 percent of Palestinians live in about 400 villages, while only 35 percent live in small towns. Even in Gaza, where close to 85 percent of the inhabitants reside in Gaza City, the culture is predominantly rural.

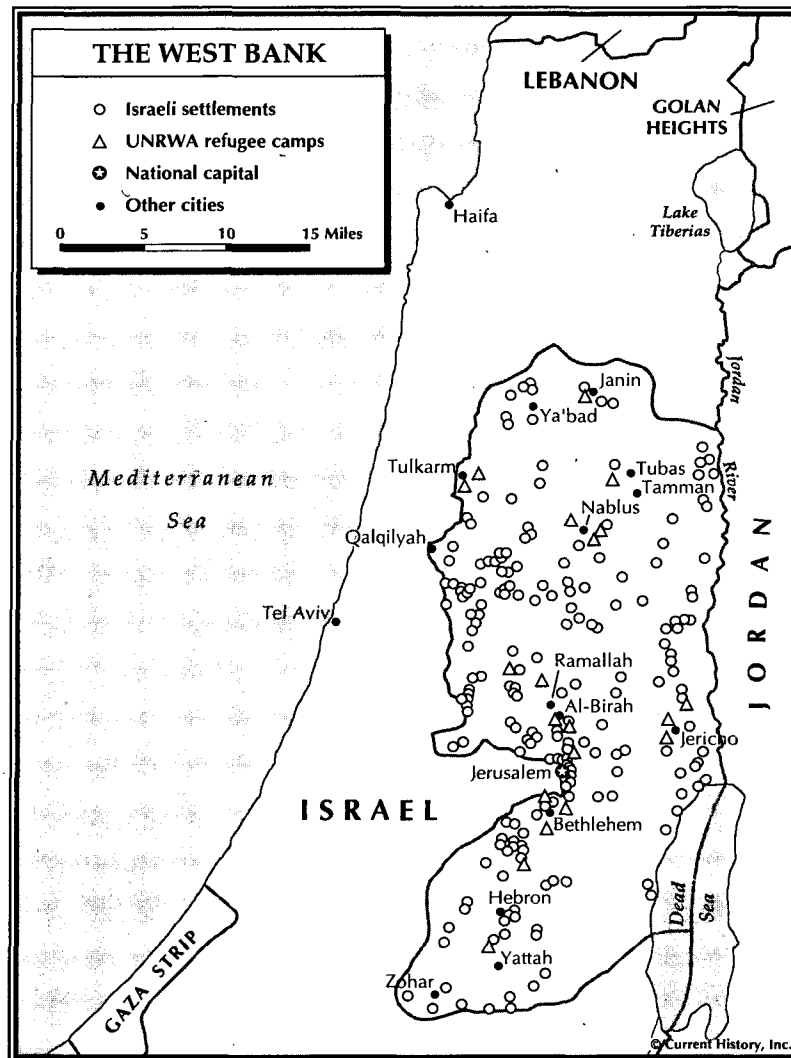
In the West Bank and Gaza there is one formal center of power—the Israeli military administration, which is headed by two area commanders, one for each

of the territories. The West Bank is divided into six military districts, each headed by a military governor appointed by the chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces. All executive, legislative, and judicial powers are in the hands of the area commanders. Social and economic affairs have been handled by a civil administration since 1981.

Through this dual system—one military administration and one quasi-civilian one—Israel controls almost every aspect of Palestinian life in the occupied territories. When the Israeli-PLO accord takes effect and Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, authority in the spheres of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism

will be transferred from the Israeli military government and civil administration to an elected Palestinian Council. Even though the Palestinians will be allowed to build a police force, Israel will continue to be in charge of external security, and for internal security and public order in the Israeli settlements and among Israelis.

Buttressed by and cooperating with the Israeli military government are the Jewish settlers. Nearly 225,000 Israeli settlers live in at least 150 settlements



in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as in 8 large settlement neighborhoods built in and around Jerusalem. In the first nine months of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's tenure, new housing construction in settlements has continued at record levels. This is expected to increase the settler population even further.

The settlements are extraterritorial enclaves in the occupied territories, with municipal councils and courts that operate on the basis of Israeli municipal law. Israeli settlers are not subject to the same laws as Palestinians; the application of Israeli laws by the military commanders places the settlers beyond local laws and legal proceedings. The settlers are armed, and by virtue of sheer numbers constitute a powerful bloc that not only threatens the fabric of Palestinian social and economic life but also influences the process of decision making in Israel.

Opposed to and discontented with the Israeli military authorities and the settlers are quasi-independent Palestinian institutions and political forces. The former include municipal councils, village councils, and chambers of commerce, in addition to a network of voluntary civic associations and private schools and universities. The activities of these bodies have been curtailed by the restrictions of the Israeli military government.

The political forces comprise local bosses affiliated with the mainstream Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and with Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), and the Palestinian People's party. The political bosses are local activists who receive their instructions from the leaders of parallel Palestinian political forces operating outside the occupied territories. Like all politicians, these local bosses are keen on protecting their turf, and on continuing to practice politics from a position of local strength.

CHANGING POLITICS

The Israeli-PLO agreement aroused the opposition and anger of Hamas; Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, and the DFLP. From their perspective, there is nothing in the agreement that indicates that Israel has renounced its claim to the West Bank and Gaza. In brief, they believe that the agreement fails to satisfy the Palestinian right to an independent state. Fatah, FIDA, and the People's party support the agreement, considering it a first step toward an independent state. Among these Palestinian political forces, the balance of power has traditionally been in favor of Fatah. But this may be changing.

Today, almost four months after the signing of the Oslo Agreement, the observer of Palestinian politics can see in the West Bank and Gaza developments that may threaten the functioning of a vibrant civil society: political feuds within Fatah, struggles between Hamas

and Fatah, sharp disagreements between leftist groups and Fatah, unprecedented alliances between Hamas and the Palestinian left, and what appears to be the beginnings of an uneasy relationship between the Palestinians of the *inside* and those of the *outside*.

One cause of these unfolding changes is the struggle for political turf among the Fatah bosses, especially in Gaza. Another is the common desire of Hamas and its leftist allies to sabotage the Israeli-PLO agreement. A third is the fear on the part of many in the West Bank and Gaza that Arafat and his lieutenants may dominate them and deprive local society of political power and prevent local Palestinians from getting their fair share of political and economic goods.

All this is taking place against the background of a change of mood in the occupied territories. Support for the agreement is eroding, at least for the time being. The Israeli government has not relaxed the extremely harsh measures it has imposed on the occupied territories since the beginning of the intifada, or uprising, including the shooting of Palestinians by troops, the sealing off of the occupied territories, tightened security at checkpoints, strict controls on Palestinians who travel to work in Israel, the escalation of human rights violations, and the incarceration of thousands of political detainees. Violence against Palestinians by Jewish settlers and right-wingers has been on the rise, in part as a response to attacks by radical Palestinians and in part also as an attempt to obstruct the implementation of the Israeli-PLO agreement. In addition, the agreement has not translated into immediate economic benefits for the Palestinians in the occupied territories. After a long period of sharp economic decline Palestinians have become impatient, and they expect a change in the quality of their lives right away.

ECONOMIC DESICCATION

A report presented by the World Bank at a donors' meeting held in Washington in September, *Developing the Occupied Territories: An Investment in Peace*, offers a gloomy picture of the economy of the West Bank and Gaza. According to the report, income has stagnated over the past decade; unemployment and underemployment, now around 40 percent, are climbing rapidly; public infrastructures and social services are grossly overburdened; and the fragile natural resource base is "threatened with irreversible damage."

Several factors account for this sad state of affairs. First, the Palestinian economy is almost totally dependent on the economy of Israel. About 110,000 Palestinians work in Israel, the majority as unskilled laborers. This represents 35 percent of the employed population of the West Bank. Moreover, Israel is practically the sole trading partner of the occupied territories.

Second, industrial production accounts for less than 8 percent of gross domestic product in the West Bank.

The agricultural sector, which contributes one-quarter of GDP and employs almost one-third of the Palestinian work force on the West Bank, faces severe constraints imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities. These include land expropriation, restrictions on water use, a tight regulatory regime for exports, a lack of government agricultural research stations and extension programs, and regulations that require Palestinian farmers to sell their produce only through Israeli marketing monopolies.

Third, public infrastructure is inadequate. About 60 percent of piped water is lost through leakages. Of the 400 Palestinian villages in the West Bank, about 140 have no reliable power supply. Solid waste collection and disposal are almost primitive in many areas, and most municipalities have inefficient sewage collection and treatment systems. The roads are in serious disrepair. Only about a fifth of West Bank villagers have telephone service. Schools and other educational facilities face serious financial difficulties.

Fourth, the PLO's financial losses—estimated at \$150 million annually as a result of chairman Yasir Arafat's support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War—had a disastrous impact on the economy of the West Bank. Many West Bank institutions were crippled because the PLO could no longer afford to finance their operations. Foreign aid from oil-rich Arab states to the occupied territories has dried up, and the cutoff of remittances from Palestinians who had been working in Kuwait until the Gulf War, after which they were expelled.

JERICHO REENTERS HISTORY

When the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin showed a serious interest in the idea of withdrawal from Gaza, Arafat publicly called for the addition of Jericho as a means of linking, at least symbolically, the West Bank to the "Gaza-first" idea. The Israeli government accepted Arafat's proposal; hence the concept of "Gaza-Jericho first," which is the core of the Oslo Agreement. It is the core because it grants *early empowerment*, or a measure of administrative and financial (but not political) autonomy, to Gaza and Jericho, which the agreement considers an integral part of the West Bank. The accord stipulates that the dual system of Israeli control will be withdrawn in Jericho and Gaza, and authority will be transferred to an elected Palestinian Council. What is most significant, perhaps, is that the agreement provides for Palestinian jurisdiction over *land*.

Despite its positive elements, the Israeli-PLO agreement evades or shrouds in ambiguity issues of great concern to all Palestinians: Jerusalem, the Jewish settlements, 1948 Palestinian refugees, Israel's illegal claim to the West Bank and Gaza, and Israeli withdrawal beyond the interim period. One must keep in mind, however, that in difficult negotiations involving

unequal parties, when there is an urgent need to reach a breakthrough, it is natural for the weaker to strive for enough agreement to reach that breakthrough. But in the final analysis the agreement, while it forced the Palestinians to define their national rights in narrower terms, provides a new basis on which they can carry on with the pursuit of their national demands. It is better to start with Gaza and Jericho than to have nothing at all. Moreover, Israel's recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people is a recognition of the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism. The challenge Palestinians face is ensuring that Gaza and Jericho are the first step toward an independent homeland.

GAZA AND JERICHO: INSTRUCTIVE DIFFERENCES

Within the larger universe of the occupied Palestinian territories, Gaza and Jericho represent two contrasting worlds. Their similarities and differences have their parallels in other Palestinian towns and villages. It is important to make some distinctions between the two, because these will have a direct bearing not only on Arafat's ability to govern but also, more generally, on the prospects for developing a viable political society.

The vast difference between the combined area of Gaza and Jericho and that of Mandatory Palestine epitomizes the gap between what the Palestinians aspire to get and what their limited capacity can actually achieve. Gaza is about 141 square miles in area, and Jericho the district is 146 square miles while the town of Jericho (the Israeli definition of it) is only 10 miles square. For the time being, Gaza and Jericho are united by this painful concession, the forced deferral of the goal of full-fledged independence.

But what unites them can also separate them, especially when there are other factors at work. Gaza is rightly described as Israel's Soweto, with its refugee camps the "townships." Here there are all the signs of injustice and chaos: Israeli-imposed segregation between the Arabs and the Jewish settlers in economics, politics, education, and law; slums and densely populated camps; uprisings and army crackdowns; and a vibrant Islamic fundamentalist movement.

Jericho too has felt the impact of the Israeli occupation, but opposition there has not been intense. The resurgence of political Islam in the form of Hamas or Islamic Jihad is not in evidence. One sees veiled women in Jericho, but it is more the veil of piety than of political dissent.

Before 1948, the approximately 80,000 people living in the Gaza Strip were integrated into the economy of southern Palestine and to a certain degree that of Egypt. Proximity to Egypt and Egypt's administration of the area from 1948 to 1967 facilitated the movement of goods and people across boundaries. It also facilitated the movement of ideas, and thus in Gaza the influence of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement,

which began as a drive for the reform of individual and social morality but quickly decided it would recognize as legitimate only governments that acted according to Sharia (Islamic law), and which was later to become the parent organization of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Jericho, on the other hand, is much closer to Amman than to Cairo: a trip by car from the town to the Jordanian capital does not take more than 45 minutes, assuming no checkpoints or border crossings. And unlike Egypt, Jordan has played no role in leading outsiders into the world of Islamic resurgence.

A much thinner population density (Jericho has only 7,500 inhabitants) and a brighter economic picture at least partially explain this distinction between Gaza and Jericho. The search for redemption took many Gazans to the Muslim Brotherhood, and then on to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The people of Jericho took a different path, if only because unemployment, the population explosion, and lack of social services were remarkably less pronounced in their area than in Gaza.

The two areas resemble each other in the origins of their populations. As a result of the Palestine war of 1948, the Gaza Strip became home for approximately 250,000 Palestinian refugees who fled or were forced to flee from Arab areas that came under the control of the Jewish forces. Today, about 10 percent of Gaza's current residents are indigenous to the Strip. The percentage of indigenous residents is much the same for the 17,000 to 20,000 people who live in the Jericho district. Many of the pre-1948 residents of Jericho are descendants of Arabized Africans left behind by the army of Ibrahim Pasha (1789–1848).

It is the distinctions between Gaza and Jericho, rather than the similarities between them, that will pose some of the real problems for Arafat. How will he reconcile these differences? In what way will he try to impose his authority? To what extent will he tolerate opposition and embark on state-building?

ARAFAT'S PREDICAMENT

Besides the good will of Israel, two things are needed for the creation of a viable entity on the West Bank and Gaza: economic prosperity and good governance. The ability of the Palestinians to meet the needs of a devastated economy and society will largely determine whether the West Bank will develop along the lines of chaotic Somalia or on the model of stable and economically dynamic Hong Kong or Singapore.

The World Bank estimates that the West Bank and Gaza need annual aid of between \$400 million and \$500 million to reap any quick benefits from peace. At a donors conference held in Washington in September under the auspices of the United States and Russia, more than three dozen countries, including Israel, pledged \$2 billion for Palestinian self-rule. This and other friendly offers of support, both in the form of

money and of ideas and proposals, should help overcome the problems of the Palestinian economy. Another element that should help is the active involvement of diaspora-Palestinian banking, construction, and investment firms, which have played an important role in building and sustaining the economic and administrative infrastructures of many Arab countries.

Political reform is as essential as economic reconstruction for the development of a stable society. In rearranging the power relations after his entry into Jericho and Gaza, Arafat will have to strike a balance between security and democracy. He needs to allow for free political participation, while at the same time neutralizing the destabilizing effect of the radical opposition. For its own reasons, Israel favors security, even at the expense of democracy, and from its perspective security may mean emasculating the Palestinian opposition. In their own interests, the Palestinians may not want to give right-wing Jewish settlers an excuse to undermine implementation of the Oslo Agreement. These settlers are rejectionists through and through, and they will do everything in their power to foil the plan. Radical elements in the Palestinian community have the same predisposition.

To achieve the balance, Arafat will have to apply a delicate admixture of persuasion, cooptation, and intermittent political pressure on Palestinian radicals. This will require reforming the PLO and organizing its factions into political parties based on more efficient structures of authority, political expression and bargaining. All political forces should be allowed to have full, proportional representation in the Palestine National Council, the Palestine Central Council, and other Palestinian policymaking bodies.

Equally significant, Arafat should be ready to convince the Palestinians in the occupied territories that the local balance of power and economic benefits will not shift to the advantage of the Tunis-based PLO political machine and those who control it. He can do this by fostering a sense of common citizenship and common interest, and the only means is through the equal participation and representation of all Palestinians—on the basis of merit and not political *mahsubiya* (patronage)—in all institutions, including the negotiating committees, the police force, and the departments and agencies that will be created in the occupied territories.

Once this came about, it would help lay the foundation for a more open Palestinian media and more universal public forms of communication in the occupied territories. It would also allow for more effective interaction between Palestinians in the occupied territories and their brethren in the diaspora. Equally significant, it would provide institutionalized structures through which the radical elements of the opposition might be able to channel their views.

This is the road that will reinforce Arafat's claim that

he is the president of all Palestinians—his official title since the Palestine National Council declared the establishment of the state of Palestine in November 1988. But what Arafat should do and what he actually does may be quite different, not only on account of the opposition of anti-Arafat elements and the resistance to reform of entrenched PLO bureaucrats, but also because of Israel's desiderata and the personality of Arafat himself.

Classified minutes of meetings between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials reveal a strong Israeli desire to shackle Hamas and Islamic Jihad, with the PLO as proxy. In this scheme of things, Arafat the president will become Arafat the wali (provincial governor) of Gaza and Jericho.

The president should have his headquarters in Jerusalem; the wali cannot. The restrictions on the wali's authority are many; he can have jurisdiction over education, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism but not over external security and foreign relations. The president can have an army if he so wishes; not so the wali, who can have only a police force for local security. The president is a sovereign who enjoys the symbols and privileges of power. The wali is a local governor who must manage the spheres of his authority in coordination with a distant overlord—in this case the government of Israel.

Accepting the role of wali rather than president is no easy matter for Arafat, whose ego is larger than life. But he knows that to break out of the framework of his accord and do things his own way is precisely what Israel does not want. Therefore Arafat will have to content himself with the role of wali, at least for the time being. However, his behavior toward his constituency in the occupied territories may be different. Here, Arafat will want to be a ruler, and not just a wali. As a ruler, Arafat may choose to reform the PLO. He may play the role of a consensus builder and a coalition-organizer. On the other hand, he may try to go so far as to seize total power, in the process crushing secular and religious opposition alike. Arafat may also assert his dominance by balancing local political groups against each other, extending his support for one group at one time and another group at another time.

In the end, Arafat's choice will be determined by his personal ambitions, his reading of the situation and the public mood, and the style of action that the opposition uses. The assassination of prominent Arafat supporters in the occupied territories may be an ominous sign of things to come. Equally significant, Arafat's choice will also be determined by how much pressure the Israeli government will put on him to contain or silence Hamas and the rest of the opposition.

Whatever choice Arafat makes, he will have impor-

tant weapons in his hands: a position of national leadership dating from the late 1960s; alliances with local political forces; the support of reform-minded Palestinians; vibrant civil organizations; and, of course, money and a sizable police force (at least 20,000-strong). Money will be indispensable for co-optation purposes, and the police will be necessary to ensure local security in Arafat's domain. Members of the police force are assumed to be Arafat loyalists, and they will be responsible to him.

In theory, this force should be organized and disciplined because it will be mainly drawn from the Palestine Liberation Army, the official armed wing of the PLO whose members have been sheltered by different Arab governments that gave them not just training but military discipline as well. It also remains to be seen whether Arafat will use the force as an organization for public law and order or as a military body for intimidating or silencing the opposition. Some Palestinian intellectuals fear that Arafat loyalists will bring their legendary corruption with them to Gaza and Jericho, and will continue the pursuit of their narrow private interests.

PROSPECTS

Some observers of Palestinian politics argue that the internal quarrels plaguing Palestinian political forces, especially Fatah in Gaza, may lead to civil war. This may be a hasty conclusion; Arafat and his police force have not yet set foot in Gaza, and he may be able to impress Gazans with his performance and his ability to impose law and order. Moreover, Arafat may be right: Hamas and others who oppose the accord are not offering a feasible alternative, and it may be that none exists.

The new wisdom of those who support the "Gaza-Jericho first" option is that the Palestinians should not insist on immediate justice but should start with something less than their irreducible minimum—a sovereign state in West Bank and Gaza—while preserving their claim to this demand. It might happen too that Rabin will turn out to be another Charles de Gaulle, who may not have planned on it from the beginning but who ended up overcoming the problem of French settlers and other daunting problems and granting complete independence to the Algerians.

In biblical times, the Israelites entered Palestine through Jericho, and with this event Jericho entered the Bible story. In modern times, Jericho may very well be the gateway through which the Palestinians will enter into their independent domain. Should this happen, Jericho will be the first chapter in what many hope will be enduring Israeli-Palestinian peace. ■

"As a traditional bellwether of Arab trends, Egypt is likely to be a leading indicator of how the slow minuet of Arab-Israeli reconciliation will affect the Arab world both internally and externally."

Egypt: An Uneasy Portent of Change

BY CARYLE MURPHY

The lights are low, the skirts are short, and the alcohol flows at "Piano Piano." Ensnconced in a skyscraper by the Nile, this exclusive dinner club is Cairo's newest hotspot of chic, a nocturnal magnet for the proliferating herds of luxury cars plying this capital's crowded streets. In its imitation of Western nightlife, Piano Piano offers Egypt's wealthy and leisured an upscale rendezvous for fun.

It's a safe bet that none of the Piano Piano regulars have ever set foot on the sprawling Egyptian military base of Haekestep in the desert north of Cairo. Here, in a converted auditorium that doubles as a makeshift military court, bearded "terrorists" press the Koran through the bars of their black steel cage, defiantly berating the army generals judging them and displaying their bruises from alleged police beatings. As they vow that "Islam is coming!" their female relatives, covered head to toe, watch from the gallery.

Egypt has always been a land of contrasts. But these two portraits highlight just how stark those differences have become since a prolonged wave of Islamic militant violence began two years ago. They also illustrate the crossroads before which Egypt stands in this last decade of the twentieth century: one path bringing greater integration into a global village marked by unfettered trade, consumerism, and free-wheeling capitalism; the other leading to a conservative, Islamic state governed by theological edicts rather than the imperatives of the secular marketplace.

A third path, of course, is always possible, one that blends the best of both in an uniquely Egyptian way. But many observers question whether Egypt's ossified political structure can find that compromise route amid an increasingly polarized society. The low-level but persistent Islamic insurgency, which had claimed more than 280 lives either at the hands of police or militants by late 1993, combined with difficult economic restructuring, widespread popular disaffection,

and the huge problems posed by a burgeoning population, all suggest that this key Arab nation is headed for heavy weather over the next few years.

Meanwhile, last September's historic Israeli-Palestinian peace accord holds out the promise of a new Middle East of peace and prosperity. But the dynamics of such an era may also midwife revolutionary changes in regional affairs and in the social contracts between rulers and ruled in both Arab states and Israel. As a traditional bellwether of Arab trends, Egypt is likely to be a leading indicator of how the slow minuet of Arab-Israeli reconciliation will affect the Arab world both internally and externally.

OVERTHROWING THE SECULAR STATE

Since the spring of 1992, Egypt has experienced the worst and longest upsurge in Islamic militant violence since the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. The militants, however, have not brought Egypt to the brink of revolution. The state remains strong, backed by its ultimate bulwark, the army, and President Hosni Mubarak's secular government, despite massive disaffection, is still regarded by a significant section of the public as more attractive than a government led by Islamic extremists.

But the militants' campaign has dealt a heavy blow to Egypt's \$3 billion-a-year tourism industry. It has also complicated Cairo's efforts at economic reform and focused an unwelcome international spotlight on its human rights behavior.

In their resiliency, the Islamic rebels have shown they have the organization and determination to wage a protracted campaign against the state. They are also able to draw on a steady stream of funding from still mostly unidentified sources inside and outside Egypt, and to draft new recruits from Egypt's disaffected youth, especially in the economically depressed areas of Upper Egypt. And if Egypt's systemic economic and political problems are not addressed in the next two years, many Egyptian and Western observers fear a broadening of the radical Islamic movement's support, particularly among those already openly alienated from

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the ruling power elite centered in Mubarak's National Democratic party.

The recent violence has been conducted largely by the Islamic Group, a loosely organized underground movement. The other main radical Islamic movement, Islamic Jihad, only began acts of violence—or at least claiming responsibility for them—in the summer of 1993 with the August 18 assassination attempt on Interior Minister Hassan al-Alfi.

The two groups share the goal of replacing Egypt's secular government with an orthodox Islamic state, but they differ over tactics, compete for funding, and have personal rivalries.¹

The government and the militants both claim the other side set off the latest round of violence. The government insists it responded to attacks by Islamic Group against policemen and Christians—13 of whom were slaughtered in a particularly bloody assault by an Islamic Group cell in the Upper Egypt hamlet of Mansheet Nasser in May 1992. Islamic Group militants say they were avenging the unprovoked slaying by Egyptian security police of several of their leaders.

In any event, what had been sporadic fighting between police and militants escalated to a new plateau that spring, followed by the June assassination of secular Egyptian writer Farag Foda, and then by attacks on tourists. These assaults, which included firing on Nile river cruise boats and tour buses, led to the death of one British national and the wounding of five Germans by the close of 1992.

Starting in early 1993, Islamic Group attacks on tourists began to taper off and stopped almost completely. The organization announced that it had not intended to kill foreigners; it had wanted only to attack "tourism" as a way to bring down the government. The reason for the lull was that Islamic Group partially accomplished its goal: at the end of 1993, tourism to Cairo and Upper Egypt, where most Pharonic monuments are located, had greatly declined (though it continued to boom in the Red Sea resorts of Sinai). Western diplomats estimate Egypt lost \$1.5 billion in tourism revenue in 1992 and 1993. Some Islamic Group militants have indicated that they will resume attacks on tourists if they begin returning in droves.

In April 1993, Islamic Group attempted to assassinate Information Minister Safwat al-Sherif. Faced with heavy police pressure in Cairo that severely weakened its military operations there, it also stepped up ambushes against policemen in Upper Egypt. Between last April and November, 32 policemen were killed in Upper Egypt, including 4 senior state security officers, according to local press accounts.

¹Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, charged by United States authorities in 1993 with conspiring to blow up buildings in New York, is claimed by Islamic Group as its "spiritual leader." He is also revered by Islamic Jihad.

Meanwhile Islamic Jihad took up its cudgels, trying to kill Interior Minister Alfi in August and Prime Minister Atef Sedki in November, the latter the first use of a remote-controlled bomb. Some analysts of the underground Islamic groups suggest that Islamic Jihad, which had hitherto concentrated on building secret networks in the army, police, and other state institutions, felt a need to draw as much publicity as Islamic Group. They may also have thought spectacular assaults like the ones on Alfi and Sedki would help recruitment efforts.

THE "ISLAMIC SOLUTION"

The Islamic movement in Egypt is a counterreaction of ordinary people. . . . It's like grass which grows in the ground. It grows autonomously, automatically.

—Egyptian physician and author
Fahmy Shinawi

The simplicity of Shinawi's insight has much truth. But a closer inspection reveals a combination of domestic and foreign factors that have contributed to the latest outbreak of Islamic violence in Egypt.

Foremost among the domestic causes is the growing divide between rich and poor and the deteriorating economic conditions of low-income groups. Both are likely to continue since the most difficult part of Egypt's economic restructuring program—aimed at shedding the state's bloated, highly subsidized public sector—is yet to come.

While Egypt's achievements in economic reform—making its currency convertible, halving its external debt, and reducing some import duties—have helped create new wealth among the upper classes, the poor have been hit hard by price increases caused by inflation and the elimination of state subsidies. Taxi fares, electricity, gasoline, cooking oil, sugar, meat, rice, and some types of bread have all risen in cost at a time when salaries have not kept pace with the cost of living and the economy is in recession. And massive unemployment (for which there are no reliable statistics) and the lack of affordable housing have forced thousands of frustrated Egyptian men and women to postpone marriage.

Mubarak's administration and his ruling National Democratic party have also suffered a remarkable erosion of public confidence since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Increasingly, Egyptians express anger over the arrogance, insensitivity, incompetence, and alleged corruption of a government they say has been too long in power. This disaffection was most apparent during last October's referendum on a third term for Mubarak. The state-run media's adulation of the 65-year-old president came close to resembling the Iraqi press's notoriously obsequious acclaim of Saddam Hussein. This, and the patently absurd official results of the vote

(an 84.2 percent turnout and a 96.3 percent "Yes" vote) were viewed with open contempt by many Egyptians. Some said they felt "insulted."

In addition, abuses by security police, including the torture of detainees (which the government denies) and the arrest of family members in order to coerce fugitive militants into surrendering, have alienated large parts of the population. Of little concern to most of Egypt's upper and middle classes, these practices are a prime motivator for Islamic Group's vendetta attacks on the police. And they bolster the militants' ability to enlist new recruits from among Egypt's angry young men, particularly in the south.

Meanwhile Egypt, like other Arab countries, is in the throes of a search for a new cultural framework or ethos. The failure of socialism, and the economic dislocations produced by Egypt's slow return to a less-centralized, capitalistic economy, have left disillusionment with both ideologies. The coup de grace for old-style Arab nationalism (always more dependent on personal ties between dictators rather than on relations between peoples) that was delivered by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait quickened Egypt's ideological malaise.

The global upsurge in Islamic piety and its attendant re-interest in Islam as a political ideology and cultural lodestar created receptive ears for the Islamic movement's remedy for Egypt's national malaise and for the lack of social justice felt by economically deprived Egyptians: strict application of Islamic law, or Sharia.

This "Islamic solution" has become a powerful concept among Egypt's struggling lower classes. The government "is afraid for its system and it thinks that giving in to religion will result in its fall," an Egyptian lawyer defending militants at a military tribunal said. "They think the Islamic trend will threaten the regime. But the Islamic system is an integrated sort of system. It includes all existing laws, and it's better than the existing laws. It protects the integrity of the person and brings justice, security, stability, and a just distribution of income."

It is easy to lose sight of the fact that the radical fringe of the Islamist movement in Egypt—personified by Islamic Group and Islamic Jihad—is only a part of a much broader and nonviolent Islamic revival in Egyptian society. As a result, Egypt's multifaceted Islamic political trend—through not necessarily its violent-prone wings now leading the battle against the government—is likely to be a long-term player in the country's future.

External factors have also played a part in the recent Islamic violence. With the end of the Soviet occupation

of Afghanistan in 1989, hundreds of young Arabs who had fought with Islamic fundamentalist mujahideen began training their sights on their home capitals, to which these "Afghan Arabs" started returning in 1990. The Egyptians among them became a powerful force in the ranks of Egypt's militant Islamic movement, creating links between domestic leaders and those who remained in exile. Egyptian veterans of the Afghan war abroad telephoned and faxed instructions on military operations to their followers at home. At the same time, Islamically oriented individuals and organizations that had poured millions into the Afghan struggle began steering some of their funding to radical Islamic movements in the Arab world.

Meanwhile, the Algerian military coup in January 1992 that aborted the expected electoral victory of the Islamic Salvation Front reinforced the conviction of Islamic activists across the Middle East that neither Arab nor Western governments would allow them to come to power through the democratic process—they would have to fight their way to power.

The massive Western intervention in the Persian Gulf War also indicated to Islamist activists of all stripes that Muslim countries led by their current secular rulers, including those in the Persian Gulf, were weaklings before the militarily superior West. Although they had no sympathy for Saddam Hussein, they felt the humiliation of an Arab country defeated by the West.² These same people then saw the West's inertia when faced with Serbian "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. For them, this was evidence that Muslims were second-class citizens in the global community.

All these events rekindled the Arab Islamic longing for a return to the glory days of early Islam when the Prophet Muhammad's kingdom covered the Middle East and reached into southern Europe. However naively Westerners may see it, radical Islamic activists believe the return of an orthodox Islamic state ruled solely by Sharia will bring another golden age for Islam. The main obstacle to this, they believe, are the Arab world's current leaders.

MUBARAK REACTS

Promising a "heavy hand," Mubarak met the Islamic rebels' challenge with increased security and a tougher "antiterrorism" law making membership in a group employing "terrorism" punishable by death. He also circumvented Egypt's civilian courts, sending hundreds of accused militants to military tribunals whose proceedings are speedier. As a result, 29 militants were executed in 1993, the single largest group of hangings for political crimes in modern Egyptian history.

On another level, alarmed by what it calls the "penetration" of government and social institutions, especially schools, by Islamically oriented individuals suspected of sympathizing with the insurgency, the

²Ghassan Salame, "Islam and the West," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1993, pp. 22–37.

government launched a “comprehensive” effort to combat their influence. This included increased discussions of “moderate” Islamic values on television and radio and punitive transfers of teachers preaching “extremist” views.

The security police also ordered state universities to bar Islamic student activists from campus hostels and from nomination lists for last fall’s student elections. Females wearing the face-covering veil, or *niquah*, were also banned from campuses—a measure officials presented as a “security precaution,” claiming that militants were using the veil to disguise themselves for military operations.

A by product of the recent violence has been increased official suspicion of Egypt’s 60-year-old Muslim Brotherhood, a moderate Islamic organization officially outlawed but tacitly tolerated as long as it avoids politics. Thus, when Brotherhood members won elections in the lawyers syndicate in 1992, the government rammed a new law—yet to be tested—through parliament tightening election procedures in all professional associations.

The most vexing question for foreign diplomats is whether the radical Islamic movement has also significantly penetrated the officers corps of the Egyptian armed forces. No one knows for sure, but the assessment among close observers is that the bulk of the defense force is still solidly behind Mubarak, though it shares the general unease about where the current struggle is leading the country. The army’s ideological cohesion is of vital importance for Egypt’s long-term stability, especially since Mubarak has failed to groom a successor or appoint a vice president after 12 years in power. The militant Islamic groups have repeatedly stated that Mubarak is a target for assassination.

As part of its offensive, the government has cut direct dial telephone service to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to make it more difficult for the exiled Islamic rebel leadership to contact cadres back home. But this has not halted the flow of faxed communiques from these groups to Cairo offices of foreign news media as late as November 1993.

In addition, Mubarak has sought the help of foreign governments in breaking the flow of money, material, and rebels into Egypt. Last April, Saudi Arabia imposed restrictions on charity donations by its citizens after a complaint from Egypt. And during a visit by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani to Cairo in the fall, the government voiced its displeasure at alleged training camps for Egyptian Islamic militants in Afghanistan.

Tacitly acknowledging that state neglect had helped foster the Islamic insurgency, the government also has promised to improve basic services for deprived populations in the shantytowns around Cairo and the villages of Upper Egypt. But given the lack of funds and bureaucratic lassitude, it remains to be seen if the official mentality can successfully switch from one of

“control” to one of “service.” Meanwhile, 1 million more Egyptians are born each year.

AND THE PUBLIC’S RESPONSE?

In the absence of public opinion polls and a probing press, it is difficult to gauge accurately Egyptian public opinion. But a few generalizations can be safely made. In large parts of Cairo, public opinion decidedly shifted against the rebels in 1993 because of their violence, which wounded scores of innocent civilians. During one Islamic Group attack in Cairo in July, bystanders chased the assailants and so badly beat one he later died in the hospital.

Cairenes have also been generally supportive of the government’s harsh security crackdown, and only a minority has raised criticisms about torture, the use of military courts for civilians, and the executions of militants. In the face of increased militant violence, Cairo’s secular business and intellectual elites have retreated from earlier pleas for faster political liberalization. They now fear that with more openness, radical Islamic groups may steamroll not only the vacuous secular opposition but moderate Islamic groups like the Brotherhood as well. In any case, Mubarak has ruled out opening the political system further until economic reforms are more advanced.

Still, for large numbers of people in Cairo’s slums and in poverty-ridden Upper Egypt, the radical rebels’ antigovernment message that Mubarak’s administration is corrupt, arrogant, and responsible for their worsening economic plight strikes a sympathetic chord. Egypt has not been rocked by street demonstrations like those that preceded Iran’s 1979 Islamic revolution, but the rebels’ ongoing operations indicate some kind of support network.

It is these Egyptians, with little to hope for, and far more numerous than Cairo’s elite, that one Egyptian security policeman had in mind when he remarked: “What I know is, Egyptians are spectators. They are waiting to see who wins. That’s the only thing I know for sure.”

It is difficult to envision a complete cessation of violence without dialogue between the government and its radical Islamic opponents—an option neither side seems seriously interested in at the moment. Egypt and many Western governments are hoping that economic improvements will eventually dampen the radical Islamic movement’s appeal and rob it of new recruits.

But this long-range strategy could take years, and during that time there is the danger that Egypt’s quest for a redefined cultural ethos could climax at a time of intensified economic hardship, creating one of those unpredictable and combustible moments in a nation’s history. Yet Egypt may, as it has before, muddle through the difficult years ahead, learning to live with a raised level of political violence and again giving thanks

to Allah for the Egyptian people's extraordinary patience.

THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

What is certain is that Egypt's domestic transition will occur against a backdrop of dramatic regional changes heralded by last September's historic Israeli-Palestinian accord.

At the official level, Egypt's reaction to the accord was, not unexpectedly, one of sweet vindication. The agreement reinforced Egypt's own 1979 peace treaty with Israel, and made its endless rounds of peace-process diplomacy over the last few years seem justified.

On the popular level, the September accord received a warm reception. Though some leftist and Islamist intellectuals pontificated about its loopholes and flaws, most approved in the end, saying it was the best that could be hoped for now. Only the radical Islamic movement rejected it completely.

But the ink had hardly dried on the landmark document before its visions of expanding Middle East horizons and opportunities began provoking fear and loathing among Egyptian policymakers and businesspeople.

For one, Egypt has worked itself out of a job. In the past, its special relationship with Israel gave Egypt the unique role of interlocutor between Israel and the Arabs. Now that the Palestinians are talking directly to the Israelis—and others may soon follow suit—some pundits began to ask the question: on what will Egypt's regional role be based? Career diplomats, however, were too busy to worry about this, going immediately into overdrive to get a similar peace accord between Israel and Syria, motivated by concerns that Syria could revert to its traditional role of spoiler if it began feeling totally isolated.

Another whispered apprehension is that once the Palestinian deal is supplemented by similar Israeli pacts with Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, the Levant will rise to reclaim its traditional position as the commercial leader of the Middle East, fueled by cash from investment-hungry entrepreneurs in the oil-rich Gulf. This potential alliance, some Egyptians fear, could leave their country on the sidelines.

Many Egyptian businesspeople spoke with dread of

the competition they could face from Israelis teamed up with their Arab Levantine brethren. Some, coddled by their country's high tariffs for imported goods, began to realize their special protection might be nearing an end. A few commentators predicted that Israeli technological know-how and links with Western financial capital would allow it to "invade" Arab countries by means other than the military.

To allay such fears and, presumably to get ahead of the pack, Egypt moved quickly to hold business seminars with Palestinian and Israeli businesspeople and announced bureaucratic "reforms" to facilitate foreign investment. These reforms have yet to be tested, and an initial scan over the Gaza Strip horizon did not give Egyptians encouragement. To their dismay, they learned that most goods they might export to Gaza already exist or are manufactured there by ventures marrying Israeli capital and machinery with Palestinian labor.

Still, because of Gaza's proximity and past administration by Egypt from 1948 to 1967—which has left many Gaza Palestinians holding Egyptian documents—it is expected that Egypt will play a bigger role there than in the West Bank.

And even as the Israeli-Palestinian self-rule pact was being signed, senior Egyptian and Israeli economic officials were meeting in Cairo for the first time since 1981 to discuss improving trade ties. To bolster that effort, Mubarak quietly ordered all restrictions on Egyptians traveling to Israel dropped in November; no longer will they be subjected to security police interrogations when doing so.

Reflective Egyptians have also begun to ponder the domestic repercussions of the emerging era in the Middle East. If its hallmarks are to be competitive trade and commerce, Egypt will have to open up its economy, eliminate bureaucratic red tape, improve the quality of locally produced goods, and fully enter the information age. All this will have some political impact, delayed though it may be.

With the Arab-Israeli conflict defused, Egyptians are also likely to become increasingly preoccupied with their internal situation, demanding more in terms of prosperity, services, and dignity. And when they hold up the mirror for this good hard look, many believe that Egypt will move. ■

"[U]ndemocratic rulers can be rational actors, and Assad is no exception. . . Assad does not find the idea of a deal with Israel unacceptable in principle, but a deal that threatens the stability of his regime is indeed unacceptable to him."

Syria and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

BY ASAD ABUKHALIL

Since coming to rule Syria in a 1970 coup, President Hafez al-Assad's style of exercising power—which is far more measured and calculated than the styles of other Arab leaders—has confused both citizens and observers. Nowhere has this been more clear than in interpreting Syria's foreign policy.

Adherents of the most popular school of thought on Assad insist he is motivated by stubborn pursuit of the goal of establishing a "Greater Syria," delineated more or less according to the dogmatic definition of the pan-Syrian Syrian Social Nationalist party. For Syria watcher Daniel Pipes, there can be no understanding of foreign policy under Assad without an appreciation of the centrality of the dream of Greater Syria in the Syrian president's mind; Pipes even seems to imply, without providing any supporting evidence, that Assad and his wife, about whom very little is known, may secretly be members of the Syrian Social Nationalist party. For another student of Syria, Moshe Maoz, Greater Syria is sometimes the philosophy behind and sometimes the strategy for Assad's foreign policy. Similarly, Itamar Rabinovich, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, attributes Syria's orientations to the outside world to the quest for Greater Syria.¹

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¹See Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of An Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and "Radical Politics and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 20 (1988); Moshe Maoz, *Asad: The Sphinx of Damascus* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1988); and Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970–1985* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²See Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991).

The problem with this approach is its assumption that Arab rulers—in this case, Assad—suffer from an inability to set realistic goals. Assad is treated as someone who cannot accurately assess his own capabilities. In reality, undemocratic rulers can be rational actors, and Assad is no exception. As a dictator who has had difficulty asserting his control over Syria proper and who can barely keep it in check, it is highly unlikely Assad is foolish enough to contemplate the vision of Greater Syria. The achievement of a greater Syrian nation is beyond his reach, and he probably knows it. He has, for example, exercised political and military hegemony over Lebanon for years, but his policies toward Lebanon have not been motivated by a desire to annex the country—which he could have done. Greater Syria is a concept to be studied by historians of the Near East of the first part of the twentieth century; it no longer characterizes Arab politics. Even the Syrian Social Nationalist party has markedly toned down its Greater Syria propaganda and has settled to being an insignificant force in Lebanese politics.

Though they do not give much weight to the Greater Syria paradigm, Raymond Hinnebusch and Alasdair Drysdale, two careful scholars of Syrian politics, take another tack with their exaggeration of the impact of Arab nationalist ideology on the regime's foreign policy.² To be sure, Arab nationalist ideology has a role in Syrian political culture, and the regime is aware of its political salience. But it would be wrong to attribute policies and actions to the ideological formulations of the ruling Baath party. Arab nationalist ideology should be studied in the context of the regime's use of it to legitimize its rule and provide rationalizations for its actions. Syrian military intervention in the Lebanese civil war in 1976, and Syria's war against the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1980s in Lebanon were in conflict with the Arab nationalist proclamations of the regime, although the regime always insisted its policies were dictated by larger Arab nationalist interests that Arab enemies could not comprehend. In the realm of foreign policy, the Baath party's role is largely marginalized. Arab nationalist ideology should

be seen as the language of foreign policy, providing the tools that serve to rationalize and justify policies and actions.

Another way of looking at Syria's foreign policy, the national security paradigm, is found in Patrick Seale's well-known biography of Assad.³ Seale is perhaps one of the most knowledgeable observers of modern Syria, although his treatment of Assad borders on sycophancy. His informative if apologetic account assumes Assad's actions and policies are dictated by national security considerations, and are not merely measures to strengthen the position of the Alawite elite. Seale attributes his subject's policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict to concern with the enhancement of Syria's—not the regime's—role in the region and in the world. With this stress on national security calculations and foreign policy, Assad's domestic apparatus of oppression receives scant attention.

REGIME SURVIVAL

Syrian foreign policy under Assad is not motivated by ideological considerations or determined by national security interests, but is based on an overwhelming concern, if not obsession, with the security of an antidemocratic minority regime.

Since seizing power 23 years ago Assad has attempted to consolidate his rule, learning from the mistakes of past Syrian military rulers. He has spared no military or political means to safeguard the interests of his regime; no ethical or moral considerations seem to have affected any decision. The regime was and is intent on pursuing its goals locally, regionally, and internationally in accordance with the mathematics of regime survival. This is not to say that some policies of the regime do not coincide with the national security interests of Syria; the enhancement of the regime's role in the region could under certain circumstances benefit Syrian national security interests.

Often observers assume a political continuity between the regimes of Salah Jadid and that of Assad simply because the two belonged to the secret Military Committee of the Syrian branch of the Baath party. In reality, the Assad regime represents a break with the idiosyncracies of Jadid. Assad, who relies on planning and calculating, was never comfortable with Jadid's fixation on the doctrine of People's Liberation War, viewing it as a threat to the army's grip on the country because it promotes the arming of the population. Assad was also less enthusiastic than Jadid about official Syrian support for the Palestinian cause. Given the events that preceded and triggered the Six Day War with Israel in 1967, Assad would not allow Syria's commitment to the Palestinian cause to supersede the interests of the regime.

WHERE ASSAD STANDS ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The first principle of Assad's policy on the conflict between Arab nations and Israel is expressed in his famous dictum: "Syria alone chooses the time and place of the battle with Israel." The slogan was of course a response to the adventurist policies of his predecessor, whom Assad blamed for the loss of the Golan Heights. Assad refuses to be provoked by Israel so long as he is not in a position to achieve victory. He also objects to the PLO's doctrine of *tawrit* (the policy of dragging Arab regimes against their will into a confrontation with Israel, which was practiced in the 1960s). Moreover, surprises are something the Syrian president wants to keep to a minimum.

Assad does not allow the arithmetic of the Arab-Israeli conflict to harm Syria's regional stature. Unlike his predecessor, he rejects the ideological typology of regimes favored by Gamal Nasser of Egypt, which labeled them either "progressive" or "reactionary." If the interests of Assad's regime are served by close ties to the rulers of the Persian Gulf states, as is now the case, no political or ideological considerations inhibit his network of alliances.

Assad also objects strongly to independent Palestinian decision making because he believes, despite the Baath party's Arab nationalist jargon, that there is no one Arab agenda so far as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, but several *wataniyyah* agendas. He puts a high premium on coordination between the various Arab states, fearing the isolation of his regime. This explains his bitter feud with Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat, all too often attributed to bad personal chemistry between the two.

Contrary to frequent assertions in Israel and the West, Assad does not find the idea of a deal with Israel unacceptable in principle, but a deal that threatens the stability of his regime is indeed unacceptable to him. When Egyptian President Anwar Sadat met with Assad before his departure for Jerusalem in 1977, Sadat stated that his differences with the Syrian leader over the trip were not over strategy but tactics. That Assad cannot accept an agreement that would appear too compromising is evidenced by his constant reference to the minimal acceptable standards for Syrians for an Arab-Israeli peace. He often maintains that there are certain principles here he cannot violate.

Its rivalry with Iraq has also affected Syria's stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Assad would not allow the rivalry to dictate Syrian policies on the Palestinian question; the "outbidding" factor in inter-Arab politics, whereby regimes accuse one another of selling out to Israel, does not sway Assad. Despite official Iraqi rhetoric criticizing Syria's stance toward the Palestinians in 1976, Assad aggressively continued his campaigns against the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies.

³Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

One of the most constant features of foreign policy under Assad has been his insistence that Arab-Israeli talks take place within an international diplomatic framework. For years the Syrian president has made it clear that the principle of negotiations with Israel for the attainment of a "comprehensive solution" to the Arab-Israeli conflict is not objectionable provided that those negotiations take place within such a framework. Assad wanted the United Nations to provide the cover for his dealings with Israel, perhaps because the country's political culture is generally opposed to the idea of direct contacts with Israel. Stating that any talks must be based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338—which call for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory in return for peace with surrounding Arab countries—was the fig leaf Assad needed for his own domestic and for Arab political purposes. This concern has in the past led Syria to reject vehemently separate deals between any Arab country (or the PLO) and Israel, especially when Syria is left out.

It is also noteworthy that Assad's official pronouncements have not been characterized by the blatant anti-Semitism one finds in the speeches of some Arab leaders, like Sadat before his political conversion or Libya's Muammar Qaddafi. Assad has always claimed that his hostility to Israel is political and that it does not spill over into his attitude toward Jews. One can find manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Syrian media, but not of the same magnitude as those in the Egyptian press. This is not to claim Assad is free of prejudice; all dictators are equal opportunity bigots because they are willing to defend their undemocratic rule by unethical and immoral means. Furthermore, the publishing house of Syria's defense minister, Mustafa Tlas, has published a variety of anti-Semitic works, including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Assad's policy has also been characterized by the refusal of the government to define the nature of the peace it is willing to accept with Israel before it obtains an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. This has been the most contentious issue in the ongoing negotiations between Israel and Syria under the Madrid formula.

Assad was only willing to proclaim that he would accept real and full peace, but Israel wanted a clear, legalistic, and specific definition of the peace he had in mind. It is highly likely Israel has been using this issue to prolong the negotiations, especially as the Syrian-Israeli track has become a very low priority for it, in the wake of the deal with the PLO.

It should also be noted that Assad in the mid-1980s flirted briefly with the notion of jihad against Israel. It appears that he was excited by Islamic fundamentalist

groups' successful military operations in Lebanon against Israel and the United States, and he endorsed their course of action in some speeches. This interest was short-lived, perhaps because Assad realized these same groups could prove a menace for Syria, especially when Syria clashed with Hezbollah in Lebanon in 1987.

GOING INTO HIS CALCULATIONS

Observers of Syrian politics agree that Assad has consistently tightly controlled policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is not true, however, that he controls all aspects of Syrian foreign policy; he allows, for example, one of his vice presidents, Abdul Halim Khaddam, to keep charge of the Lebanese file though Assad still makes the most important decisions. Thus Assad is the key, but not the sole, determinant of Syrian policy on Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is often assumed in Western writings about the Middle East that Arab dictators feel no pressure from their public because there is no such thing as Arab public opinion. Unless one believes in the inherent inequality of groups of people, one cannot accept the notion that some peoples have opinions while others, presumably for genetic reasons, do not have views of their own. In actuality the people of Syria are highly opinionated on political matters, and the Palestinian question remains high on the emotional and political agendas of most. Syrian political culture is sophisticated and rich, although Assad's undemocratic regime has suppressed outlets of free political expression. Yet in recent years Assad has invited prominent independent Syrian intellectuals to meet with him. These individuals are known critics of the regime, and Assad has been consulting with them on political issues, including Syrian policy on the Arab-Israeli question.⁴

Another determinant of policy derives from Syria's political position in the region. Under Assad a principle has emerged: the more the regime feels itself isolated in the region, the more paranoid and militant its behavior becomes. It was no coincidence that Syrian participation in Madrid in 1991 came about during a period when Syria was enjoying unusually good relations with states both in and outside the region in the wake of the Persian Gulf War.

Assad also cares about his name in the history books. He is well aware that his place in Arab history will be—at least partly but perhaps largely—a function of his role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. He cares about such notions as *butulah* (heroism), stressing that concept in published interviews, and he wants to be remembered as a leader who did not forfeit Arab and Syrian rights at the bargaining table with Israel.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Syrian foreign policy has undergone significant alteration in the aftermath of the collapse of the former

⁴This information comes from a close friend, a Syrian, who has participated in the meetings. For obvious reasons, his name cannot be revealed.

Soviet Union. But while the elimination of Soviet political and military sponsorship has markedly narrowed the political maneuvering room for the regime, this alone cannot explain the changes, both major and minor. In addition to the loss of its Soviet sponsor and the end of cold war, there are other factors that must be considered in analyzing Syria's role in the Gulf War and in the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Syria has suffered from the fall in value of the Lebanese card. Not only has the PLO's relocation outside Lebanon rendered Syria's control of Lebanese affairs less significant, but world interest in Lebanon almost vanished after 1984, when American, British, and Italian peacekeeping troops were withdrawn. Lebanon ceased then to be the powerful bargaining chip for Syria it had been in the late 1970s. Related to the Lebanese situation is Assad's failure to control the PLO, since one of the major thrusts of Syrian policy in Lebanon has been holding that organization in check and undermining the leadership of Assad's foe Yasir Arafat.

Another important consideration is often ignored in analyses of Syria's current foreign policy. Assad, who is 63 and suffered a massive heart attack in 1983, is aware of the limitations of age; indeed, he has talked about the years becoming burdensome. The sudden elevation in the military and political stature of his eldest son, Basil, should be seen as part of Assad's preparation for the succession. To facilitate the accession of his son after his death, Assad seems intent on achieving a full recovery of the Golan Heights, which would boost the political legitimacy of his rule, and his dynasty.

The results of Syria's changing vision of the world outside it have been noticeable on some levels. While Assad continues to insist on the fig leaf of an international framework for Arab-Israeli talks, the leaf has become much smaller. The current peace talks have become direct negotiations, with the international community staying on the sidelines. Even the United States has chosen to remain aloof from the process, sometimes to the chagrin of both sides. Official political discourse has also changed. The tone of references to Israel has become less polemical; Israel is now called Israel, for example, after years of references to the "Zionist entity" and the "evil enemy."

CONCLUDING THE PEACE

Syrian reaction to last September's accord between the PLO and Israel has been inconsistent at best. On the one hand, Syria sent its ambassador in Washington to represent the country at the White House signing ceremony, yet criticisms of the agreement have been

heard from all Syrian officials, including Assad. Syria has also suddenly decided to get closer to the radical PLO factions; immediately after the agreement was signed, Vice President Khaddam met with George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Nayif Hawatimah of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Ahmad Jibril of the PFLP-General Command. Syria, of course, maintains that Palestinian criticisms of the accord emanating from Damascus are founded on Syrian belief in freedom of expression and democracy. It is clear Syria has been trying to have it both ways: working to undermine the credibility of the agreement without burning its bridges with the United States and European powers. There is evidence that the more Israel expresses its lack of interest in the Syrian-Israeli track of the Middle East negotiations the more critical Syria becomes of the PLO-Israel deal.

But Syrian opposition is operating under certain political constraints this time around. Assad cannot, as he used to do, discredit the accord since it is based on the same principles that govern his negotiations with Israel. The Syrian negotiations with Israel have dealt solely with the Golan Heights, and Assad is, from many indications, not unwilling to reach an agreement if Israel grants him the Golan Heights, even in the absence of progress on the Palestinian question. Assad also realizes that the Arab political map has undergone radical transformation since the Gulf War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. There is no Arab or international radical camp he can join in opposing the agreement. He also needs financial aid from the Gulf countries, which are closely aligned with the United States and its foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. Moreover, Palestinian opposition to the agreement is being voiced by groups and organizations that have lost credibility and effectiveness over the years, and Assad has failed miserably in his efforts to create an alternative PLO leadership.

The possibility remains that Assad might take a risky, adventurist path if he becomes convinced that the United States and Israel are fixated on the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks, with complete disregard for Syria's interests and goals. If Assad loses faith in the peace talks, he could, under certain desperate circumstances, decide to strike at his opponents by forming an alliance with Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Hamas among Palestinians and Hezbollah in Lebanon. He could choose to form a radical political axis comprising Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Iran. Such a scenario appears far-fetched at this stage. But Assad's resilience and resolve cannot be underestimated. ■

"Between 1989 and 1993 martial law was rolled back; political parties, trade unions, and professional associations were legalized; and restrictions on the press were eased. These are significant achievements, but they are still precarious."

Jordan: Bread, Freedom, or Both?

BY MARY C. WILSON

Over the past four years there have been two parliamentary elections in Jordan, and a "National Charter" designed to institutionalize oppositional politics has been written and ratified. This political liberalization has been carried out in the context of economic contraction and regional upheaval, which usually means there is less rather than more participatory politics. It has also occurred at a time when Jordan's primary regional role—to temper Palestinian aspirations and represent them to the world—is changing. As the economy and the outside pillars of the state collapse, political liberalization has served to mobilize citizens in support of the state.

This process began inauspiciously, with the "bread riots" of 1989. That April, rioting erupted in the southern town of Maan and spread to other towns and villages in the south, traditionally the heartland of the ruling Hashemite family. The catalyst was an increase in the price of fuel and food decreed by an austerity program negotiated with the International Monetary Fund after Jordan defaulted on its \$8.3-billion foreign debt. With incredible lack of foresight, the government raised the price of fuel while government-controlled cab fares remained low; taxi drivers were the first to voice their outrage. The rioters demanded a rollback of the price increases and a new prime minister.

Despite the use of security forces to isolate the region and the stifling of protests by the army, the disturbances spread north to Madaba and Salt, and to university students in Amman. The official casualty toll after four days of unrest was 8 dead and 83 injured; unofficial counts put the number of people killed at 11. Scores were jailed for months without trial.

The political grievances were easier to address than the economic ones. King Hussein replaced the prime minister and charged the new government "to prepare for a return to parliamentary life." Such a move had

been in the air well before the riots. In 1988 the king had renounced Jordan's territorial claim to the West Bank, the part of Palestine occupied by Jordanian troops in the 1948 war with Israel and united with Jordan in 1950. Since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, Jordan had maintained its ultimate right of stewardship and reasoned that with Israel occupying a portion of the kingdom, parliamentary rule in Jordan was impossible. This rationalization, which had governed political life for more than 20 years, evaporated with Hussein's announcement, and Jordanians had reason to expect an opening up of political life. Instead they experienced an increasingly authoritarian style of government in which the press was emasculated and the secret police seemingly omnipresent. It was against this background that economic complaints exploded into political demands.

Six months after the April riots, the first parliamentary elections since 1967 took place. Despite an allocation of seats that favored traditionally conservative and loyalist rural areas (including the south, despite the recent riots), the election results were unexpected. Of the 80 seats in the lower house, 32 went to Islamists in what analysts described as a protest vote. Islamists formed the largest bloc in the new chamber, and the combination of Islamists, nationalists, and leftists promised that it would be more than a rubber stamp for government policies.

The pressing economic grievances that sparked the 1989 riots were submerged in the activity around the elections. Although economic issues formed part of most campaign pitches, the belt-tightening measures that had provoked the riots remained in place after the elections. The austerity program helped improve the national balance sheet in the year following the disturbances. Though impressive to foreign lenders, this achievement was not felt in the pockets of most Jordanians, who experienced a 38 percent decline in per capita income between 1985 and 1990.

The response to the 1989 bread riots was essentially political; King Hussein applied the salve of political liberalization to economic wounds. In the early 1990s Jordan has been hit by two more earthquakes: the

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Persian Gulf War and last year's accord between the PLO and Israel. For both, the tool of political liberalization has been further developed to absorb the after-shocks. While underlying problems—especially economic ones—remain to be adequately addressed, Jordanians may take justifiable pride in the way the country has coped with these events thus far.

A GULF OPENED

Jordan had reason to be guardedly optimistic about its efforts to cut its foreign debt and liberalize political institutions when it was plunged into the international crisis precipitated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. King Hussein's refusal to join the United States-led coalition against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein propelled him to the pinnacle of popularity in Jordan and among Arabs in general. But in refusing he also incurred the wrath of some of his major financial supporters: the United States, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although the Jordanian economy suffered from the consequent withdrawal of foreign aid, the curtailment of international trade, and the arrival of refugees and returnees, economic grievances continued to be sidelined by political developments. King Hussein's sudden and overwhelming popularity shielded him from the devastating economic consequences of the crisis.

In economic terms, choosing sides in the Gulf War was a no-win situation for Jordan. Iraq was Jordan's leading trading partner. It supplied 85 percent of Jordan's oil needs and it was repaying a \$450-million trade deficit with Jordan with oil. However, some 300,000 Jordanians, mainly of Palestinian origin, lived and worked in Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE had promised \$455 million in aid to Jordan in 1990. Hence King Hussein's strenuous attempts to mediate the crisis and his refusal to choose sides; he condemned Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, and more or less observed the UN sanctions against Iraq, but the king would not join the coalition against Saddam.

But there was no middle ground. As the American-led coalition gained adherents and stepped up its rhetoric, not to join the coalition was to be against it, and being against the coalition was supporting Saddam Hussein. As the king hung back, promises on financial support were broken and borders were closed to trade. Still, political considerations led the king to maintain his middle-of-the-road policy, even if it was interpreted by the coalition as support for Iraq. Iraq was the only power in the region that could deter Israel from expelling the Palestinian population from the West Bank—a development Jordan feared, given the impact of the end of the cold war on levels of Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union and the formation of a right-wing government in Israel in June 1990.

As the weeks passed and the king's repeated efforts at mediation were ignored, Jordan hunkered down for

the worst. Government spending was cut by 25 percent in September. Predictions of Jordan's economic and political collapse were rampant, not least in the royal family. Crown Prince Hassan drew a graphic picture of Jordan's plight: "Our borders are sealed. We have committed economic suicide. Now we are told that if we want to win compensation we must make a political U-turn. The long knives are drawn."

Yet King Hussein is nothing if not a survivor, and his decision to pursue political goals over economic ones in the Persian Gulf crisis, as in 1989, has been vindicated thus far. His unprecedented popularity in Jordan and among the Arab peoples at large during the war saw him through the immediate economic consequences of his stance. At the beginning of the crisis, rice, sugar, and powdered milk were rationed, and after the war's end in early March 1991 the price of bread was raised—this time without sparking riots. By the end of the war, estimates of Jordan's economic losses ranged from \$1.7 billion to \$5 billion.

As in 1989, when preparations for parliamentary elections served both to distract the country from economic troubles and to bind it together in a common effort, so too after the Gulf War a similar exercise took place. In June 1991 a National Charter was ratified. This document had been written in the course of the previous year by a 60-member royal commission representing all political trends in the country, from the Communists on the left to the Islamists on the right. The charter provides for political pluralism in return for the allegiance of all political parties to the monarchy—in other words, it lays the foundation for a loyal opposition. Until then, opposition, mainly from the left in the 1950s and 1960s and from the Islamist right in the 1980s, had implicitly or explicitly questioned the monarchy's legitimacy—as a British creation, as nonnationalist, or as un-Islamic. The National Charter places the opposition on a level one rung below the monarchy; the policies of a particular government may be questioned and opposed, but the monarchical framework has been legitimized by virtue of the contractual nature of the charter. This is a significant achievement. Given the king's close control of government, however, it remains to be seen whether the space between government and the monarchy can be widened enough for oppositional politics.

Will it be wide enough, for example, to tolerate mounting grievances as the economic consequences of the war reverberate into the future? Trade has not yet returned to normal. Nor have Jordan's largest benefactors in the Gulf resumed aid. But by far the most serious long-term dilemma created by the Gulf War is the 8 percent increase in population represented by the forced return from Kuwait and other Gulf countries of 300,000 Jordanians, most of whom, as with the influx of refugees following the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967, are Palestinians. More than 70 percent of the

returnees in the latest wave had spent more than 20 years abroad; more than 70 percent had neither land nor a house to return to.

The difficulties involved in absorbing the returnees into the work force and into the fabric of life are immense. Unemployment immediately shot up from 20 percent to 30 percent. The injection of capital by returnees fortunate enough to get their savings out allowed Jordan to achieve 8 percent growth in 1992 (15 percent in the construction sector), but this was a windfall, a one-time-only boom that cannot make up for lost remittances, which in 1989 amounted to \$623 million. And even if money were plentiful, some problems, like the dearth of water, cannot be solved by cash.

Many of the returnees are well educated and highly skilled. While they had no political rights in the Gulf, they did have a high standard of living. Since most carry Jordanian passports they are by definition Jordanian citizens and will be able to take part in the political process as outlined in the National Charter. This makes non-Palestinian Jordanians nervous and reopens the fissure between them and those of Palestinian origin, which had been closed during the war. It is also unclear whether or for how long the participation of Palestinian Jordanians in national political life will deflect their economic needs and expectations. This is an interesting reversal of Jordan's role up until now vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which had been to provide them with the economic necessities of life—home, job, passport required to live and work abroad—in order to ameliorate their political grievances.

JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIANS

Relations with the countries of the anti-Iraq coalition are being repaired, largely because of Jordan's importance in the arena of Arab-Israeli affairs. The convening of a new round of Middle East peace talks in 1991 gave Jordan a stage on which it could "rehabilitate" itself. Jordan was to provide the umbrella for the participation of a Palestinian delegation. And, as Abd al-Salam al-Majali, the head of the Jordanian delegation, admitted, it also had another task during the negotiations: "to remove the wrong impression people had about Jordan's stand on the Gulf crisis." The mere agreement to take part brought about the beginning of a reconciliation with the United States and Britain. In July the United States released \$35 million in economic aid to Jordan that had been frozen during the war, and

Jordan's participation in the first round of peace talks in Madrid in October was recognized by a further \$22 million in military aid.

Jordan played its role flawlessly. In the spirit of the 1988 disengagement and the subsequent creation of a Palestinian state-in-exile with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasir Arafat as president, the Jordanian delegates throughout the proceedings scrupulously avoided any appearance of speaking for the Palestinians. In the end, Israel agreed to meet the delegations separately, although the aspect of a joint delegation was maintained by including two Jordanians on the Palestinian team and vice versa. The Jordanians on the Palestinian delegation were careful to defer to the Palestinian members.

With Palestinian issues largely excised from the bilateral talks between Israel and Jordan, the two worked on developing an agenda. Talks between Israel and the Palestinians, however, foundered. It was a great surprise—not least to the delegations themselves—when Israel and the PLO agreed to mutual recognition outside the framework of the peace conference. Immediately afterward the Jordanian-Israeli agenda, which had been ready long before, was published.

King Hussein reacted with restraint to the PLO-Israeli accord: "We were taken aback. . . that this was done without our knowledge. . . But, going back to the original objective, it was always to enable the Palestinians to speak for themselves. . ." Others in Jordan were more vociferous. Islamists and some leftists denounced the recognition of Israel. Both also opposed the Jordanian-Israeli agenda. Some Jordanians were petrified by the thought that the end result of the accord would be to inundate Jordan with yet more Palestinians; they spoke of repatriating Palestinians—meaning that those who did not choose to return to Palestine would be disenfranchised and treated like any other expatriate community.¹ If some Palestinian Jordanians were encouraged by the prospect of a Palestinian state, they were also unsettled by the possibility of repercussions on their status in Jordan. For everyone the question of who is a Jordanian and who is a Palestinian suddenly became important. All too often it was couched in terms of two identities with mutually exclusive interests and political goals.

The king responded by reassuring all Jordanians that they had a place in the kingdom. His speeches after the accord stressed national unity, with repeated direct appeals to "fellow citizens, beloved Jordanians, whatever your origin." The concern of the government was to respond to the accord in such a way as to ensure that Jordan would not be left behind, as a recipient of international aid and investment or as a trading partner in any new regional configuration.

There is no doubt that the accord between the PLO and Israel shook Jordan. This shock, like the two previous ones, was followed by state-instituted politi-

¹Various scenarios were offered for the feared wave of immigration. Failure of Palestinians to rule themselves in Gaza and Jericho, it was said, would confirm the Israeli occupation and give Israel a freer hand to expel Palestinians. Civil strife over the accord in the occupied territories would create more refugees. The easing of travel restrictions consequent to self-rule would make Jericho a way station on the road to Amman, or, alternately, self-rule would give Palestinians a base from which they could take over Jordan.

cal activity—in this case the scheduled parliamentary elections in November, which allowed for the accord to be aired and absorbed by the Jordanian people. The election results appear to support King Hussein's course. Islamists lost seats (from 32 to 18) and leftists opposing the accord and the Jordanian-Israeli agenda were shunned. Traditionalists loyal to the king gained seats, as did liberals and the liberal left, who were in favor of both the accord and the agenda.

A change in the electoral law may, however, be responsible for the Islamists' poor showing. In the previous election voters could vote for as many candidates as there were seats in their district, and multiple votes gave voters the latitude to vote their hearts as well as their immediate interests. With only one vote in 1993, voters voted their interests. And their interests in lean times (access to government services and jobs) induced a certain conservatism—not in the sense of voting for conservative candidates but of voting for candidates who either had a track record of successful access to government and patronage in the home district or who were on the same wavelength as the king. Local observers characterized the result as a reversion to "tribalism," but it was more like going for the sure bet in hard times (though this does not explain the election of Jordan's first woman member of parliament, Toujan Faisal).

STILL UNFINISHED

Between 1989 and 1993 martial law was rolled back; political parties, trade unions, and professional associations were legalized; and restrictions on the press were eased. These are significant achievements, but they are still precarious. Political parties did not make much, if any, difference in the recent election; most candidates ran and won as independents. Opposition to changing the electoral law was overwhelming, but the king approved the provisional law of one voter-one vote anyway, without putting it through parliament. Apportionment of seats within voting districts remained the same as in 1989, still biased in favor of traditionally pro-Hashemite rural constituencies; thus the Tafleeh district has one seat for every 8,407 registered voters while Amman's second district has one for only every 38,283 registered voters. Newspapers are still subject to government review, although the range of subjects and opinions that may be published is wider than before.

These types of control encourage a certain political cynicism. Many believe, for example, that charges of arms trafficking that led to the conviction of a leading Islamist member of the 1989 parliament were trumped up to discredit him personally and Islamists generally. Along with low voter turnout (41 percent in 1989 and 52 percent last year), such beliefs indicate skepticism about the depth of political liberalization.

Dishearteningly, poverty in the kingdom has held

steady at about 30 percent of the population. In recent years there has been a marked fall in per capita income, from \$1,570 in 1985 to \$980 in 1990. Jordan has a high birthrate—about 3.4 percent in 1990—and more than 45 percent of its people are younger than 15. The future of the country's youth and any amelioration of poverty are doubly uncertain in the economic climate of the period after the Gulf War. With more competitors for limited state services and jobs, social and political cleavages between Jordanian Palestinians and Jordanians, and between Palestinians well integrated into Jordan and refugee camp residents and recent returnees may deepen. It is not at all certain how long political liberalization can make these problems seem less urgent, or cushion strife between groups. Equally, as economic woes grow more intractable, the process of liberalization itself may be discredited.

Jordan's relations with its neighbors are crucial to its economic well-being. The Gulf War affected these relations and Jordan's economy negatively; the effect of the PLO-Israeli accord remains to be seen. The repair of relations with the Arab members of the coalition is moving slowly. In November, King Hussein made his first official visit to Cairo since the war to discuss the progress of Middle East peace, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is acting as his mediator with angry Gulf rulers. The Saudis are "willing to listen" but are still withholding aid; the Kuwaitis, however, "have written off the king." The key to aid for Jordan now lies in how or if the PLO-Israel agreement is enacted. The accord, properly fulfilled, and the possibilities for regional economic coordination it holds out may offer the best hope for Jordan's development in the long run.

But there is also the possibility the accord will exacerbate regional tension, solidify the Israeli occupation, and, as many Palestinian Jordanians fear, lead to another wave of Palestinian refugees. King Hussein is poised to move ahead—he has reportedly met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and a Jordanian-Israeli treaty is said to have been drafted—but he must wait until all peace treaties are ready to be signed. In the meantime, will Jordan's economy and the king's popularity slip beyond redemption?

Finally, King Hussein has been on the throne so long—since 1953—that he seems an old man, although he is only 58. A 1992 cancer operation has raised the specter of succession. When the king returned to Amman after his surgery, people poured out into the streets to welcome him home. Certainly the vast majority of his subjects wish him long life and dread the inevitable passing of the torch. This is no reflection, however, on Crown Prince Hassan, who is popular and respected in his own right, both at home and internationally. The succession appears assured—all the more so given the institutionalization of the monarchy's legitimacy and the political process in the National Charter. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian Identities and Preferences:

Israel's and Jerusalem's Arabs

By Abraham Ashkenasi. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992. 208 pp., \$45.00.

Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967

By William B. Quandt. Washington, D. C.: Brookings Books, 1993. 582 pp., \$15.95.

Rising from the detritus of recent Middle Eastern commentary, Abraham Ashkenasi's *Palestinian Identities and Preferences* draws an empirical sketch of Palestinians' attitudes toward Israel, Israelis, and their own political future. Ashkenasi, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is cautiously pessimistic about the possibilities for long-term political cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis. He argues that Palestinians, especially younger ones, are more radical and ideologically fragmented than has been assumed by Israeli academics and politicians, and that this extremism is most evident in—but not confined to—the occupied territories.

Ashkenasi's data on the fragmentation of opinion among the young does not bode well for the PLO's foray into the day-to-day administration of Gaza and Jericho as envisioned under the Israeli-PLO agreement. While their elders seem willing to accept PLO chairman Yasir Arafat's mainline positions on the future of Jerusalem, the role of religion in Palestinian society, and other major issues, younger Palestinians are more likely to embrace Islamic fundamentalism or virulent forms of secular nationalism, dismissing the PLO as overly accommodationist. This radicalism is not all self-indulgent bravado; Ashkenasi traces its roots to material frustrations with a nation that has left younger Palestinians with a lot of education and few places to use it. Recent fighting between young Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the soon-to-be-autonomous zones seems to vindicate the author's pessimism about the ease with which many Palestinians will submit to PLO gradualist solutions to their social and political problems.

Palestinian Identities is most useful when it uncovers the social and ideological currents in Palestinian opinion. The author is sensitive to an array of subcultures in Palestinian society, most of which have not entered into the rock-throwing chronicles of American journalism. The political differences between Christian and Muslim Palestinians, as well as the distinctive views of Palestinian women, are given enough space to produce a convincing portrait of a complex culture at a volatile time. The value of this nuanced treatment compensates

for the book's frequent descent into bloodless social sciences and an awkward attempt to discuss general theories of nationalism and cultural differentiation.

Beyond its descriptive value, Ashkenasi's research has serious implications for American diplomacy. How can the United States encourage a moderate, cohesive Palestinian polity without discrediting itself and Palestinian moderates in the eyes of a rising generation of radicals? And how can this be done while preserving a strong alliance with Israel? In *Peace Process*, William Quandt looks at American efforts to cope with this and other Arab-Israeli quandries since 1967, leading up to a series of recommendations for the Clinton administration.

Quandt, a member of the National Security Council in the Nixon and Carter administrations, provides an abundance of detail on the vicissitudes of American policy toward Israel and the Arabs, and he has a sure grasp of the political and personal forces behind American policy. He is generally critical of Arab-Israeli policy under Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan, when Middle Eastern issues tended to be dismissed as regional manifestations of cold war politics. He is sympathetic to President George Bush's regionalist policy, especially his occasional willingness to prod Israel toward the negotiating table, but favors the Carter administration's conception of the activist peace broker above all; the book's implicit historical lessons owe much to Carter's successful conclusion of the Camp David accords.

Quandt believes that the United States "has done best when it has tried hardest" to calm Arab-Israeli tensions. He praises Carter's willingness to risk his domestic popularity for peace in the Middle East, and to place the full power of his office behind negotiations. *Peace Process* emphasizes, however, that lasting peace requires more than presidential fits of conscience. Tangible commitments such as huge foreign aid contributions to Israel and Egypt (averaging over \$5 billion to each country annually since Camp David) and occasional diplomatic sleights-of-hand are necessary to overcome the habitual belligerence of negotiators on both sides.

Peace Process is in every way an insider's account of Middle East diplomacy, and its close-up narrative is both the book's primary achievement and its most profound limitation. The detail can be instructive; the section on the Camp David talks captures the frustrated optimism of the Carter and his aides, as well as the sometimes substantive, sometimes petty obstacles to peace. But the sheer descriptive weight of cables, conferences, and off-the-record conversations often

relegates the imperatives of domestic political and military strategy to a few desultory paragraphs, leaving personality and diplomatic minutiae to play the lead in Middle East policy.

Quandt's book also bears witness to a career spent listening to diplomatic press conferences, neither the most original nor the most interesting forum for discussing foreign affairs. Scraping the well-worn furrows of diplomatic platitude, the author argues for "a realistic appraisal of the regional situation. . . [with] pressure [that] must be skillfully exerted. . . [and] timing [that] is crucial for successful negotiations."

Quandt's banalities undercut an otherwise worthy theme: that peace in the Middle East comes hard, and that the United States must expend patience, prestige, and funds to nurture it. Even then, the wisest policies can melt in the heat of regional animosities and suspicion. Quandt is rightly suspicious of easy historical analogies or rigid ideological poses, and one assumes he would be equally wary of sunlit photo opportunities on the White House lawn. Like Ashkenasi's take-nothing-for-granted empiricism, Quandt's skeptical historical sensibility saves his narrative—if not his conclusions—from the buzzword-laden certainties of the moment; both authors deserve credit for embarking on an unusually critical and wide-ranging journey through Middle Eastern politics.

Yet are skepticism and empiricism alone an adequate effort for peace? While the pact between Israel and the PLO may have been less than kind to punditry, it revealed politics' tendency to transcend itself, and offer, however briefly, a necessity-driven diplomacy leavened by hope rather than fear. America's policy will be most effective if it can give rhetorical and material sustenance to this fragile concoction, skeptically, realistically, but not without an energizing idealism. If the United States can accommodate September-like transformations with a full awareness of the obstacles they will have to face, it will have done its duty—to statecraft and to its political conscience.

Matthew W. Maguire

Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 6th ed.

By Martin Gilbert. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 146 pp., \$16.95.

Churchill biographer Martin Gilbert has taken on the burden of explaining the twentieth century in the Middle East in the form of maps. Many of the maps provide useful information, such as changes in Jewish and Palestinian distribution and borders continuously redrawn by conflict. Those looking for a succinct geographical representation of the past century of history, however, will find a muddled picture. The maps are often overwhelmed by lengthy explanations of the events the maps show. Geographical representations of diplomatic visits, such as "Warren Christopher's First Journey 19-23 February 1993,"

reveal little about the content of the missions. Maps of statistical information, like European—but not American—dependence on Arab oil in 1973 and the international weapons trade with the Middle East, would have been more useful as tables. Even intellectual trends are given plot points: "The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Aims and Opinions November 1973-March 1974" is mostly lengthy quotes and a map that repeats information from earlier in the work. Gilbert tries to synthesize too much in a format not intended for such a wide spectrum of information; the result is an atlas that perplexes as much as it explains.

Melissa J. Sherman

The Middle East after Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait

Edited by Robert O. Freedman. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993. 384 pp. \$49.95, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

Robert Freedman has once again pulled together a comprehensive collection of essays by a distinguished group of analysts. The book provides a variety of perspectives on the Gulf War and its aftermath; a chapter assessing Europe's role in the war (especially Germany's) would have helped round out the coverage on the international response to the post-cold war world's first crisis.

William W. Finan, Jr.

Islam and Democracy:

Religion, Politics, and Power in the Middle East

By Timothy D. Sisk. Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1992. 84 pp., \$6.95.

The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?

By John L. Esposito. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 247 pp., \$9.95.

Islam and Democracy is a synthesis of the views expressed by prominent academics, journalists, and former government officials during a conference on whether Islam and democracy are compatible. The views are mixed, but the prevailing mood is antithetical to the simplistic arguments of some that a new "Evil Empire"—political Islam—has arisen with the demise of Soviet communism.

In *The Islamic Threat*, John Esposito also takes to task those who posit fanatical Muslims as the West's next enemy. His book is an essential sorting out of a complex picture. As Esposito notes, "The specter of attacks by terrorists motivated by ethnic, religious, or ideological beliefs and grievances is real. The challenge today, as in the past, is to avoid the easy answers yielded by stereotyping or the projection of a monolithic threat, to distinguish between the beliefs and activities of the majority . . . and a minority of extremists who justify their aggression and violence in the name of religion, ethnicity, or political ideology."

W.W.F. ■

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

DECEMBER 1993

INTERNATIONAL

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Dec. 23—At a meeting of the 12 member countries in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and President Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan sign an agreement under which Russian troops will police Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan; thousands of Russian soldiers are already stationed along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. New members Georgia and Azerbaijan attend.

Dec. 24—At the meeting, a Russian draft agreement guaranteeing the rights of "national minorities" in member countries and giving the 25 million Russians living outside Russia "special status" and, potentially, dual citizenship, is removed from the agenda after opposition from members including Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

(See also *Japan*)

Dec. 15—The Uruguay Round of world trade talks under GATT's sponsorship is completed after 7 years of diplomatic wrangling. If the agreement is ratified by all participating countries, it will be signed in April and in 1995 GATT will become the World Trade Organization.

Middle East Peace Conference

Dec. 12—Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agree that the beginning of the transition to Palestinian self-rule, set for December 13 in the Israeli-Palestinian accord signed in September, will have to be delayed at least 10 days; holding up the process are disagreements over the deployment of Israeli troops around Jewish settlements, the size of the area around Jericho where Palestinian self-rule will apply, and control over the boundary between Jericho and the rest of the West Bank.

United Nations (UN)

(See also *Bosnia and Herzegovina*; *Somalia*)

Dec. 20—The General Assembly votes unanimously to appoint a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who will be responsible for preventing "human rights violations throughout the world."

ALGERIA

Dec. 7—Salah Fellah, head of the Foreign Ministry's Asia Department, is shot by gunmen near his home southwest of Algiers, and later dies; the government blames Muslim militants for the attack.

Dec. 9—Gunmen kill 8 police officers and 2 civilians in Algiers.

Dec. 15—Twelve Bosnian and Croatian workers are slain at a construction site in Algiers; the militant Muslim Armed Islamic Group takes responsibility. Since December 1, the Muslim militants' reported deadline for foreigners to leave Algeria, 16 foreigners have been killed.

Dec. 28—Near Algiers, Youssef Sebti, a poet, is found murdered; the police attribute the killing to Muslim militants,

who have allegedly been targeting Algerian intellectuals as part of their campaign of violence.

ARGENTINA

Dec. 29—The national legislature completes action on a measure that will allow President Carlos Saúl Menem and future presidents to run for a 2d term; the bill also shortens the president's term to 4 years and nullifies the requirement that the chief of state be Roman Catholic.

AUSTRIA

Dec. 6—Ten letter bombs addressed to supporters of refugees, immigrants, or minority groups have exploded or been defused in the past 4 days, *The New York Times* reports; on December 5 Helmut Zilk, the mayor of Vienna, sustained serious injuries opening one at his home in the capital; police suspect neo-Nazi involvement.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

(See also *Algeria*)

Dec. 6—Five people are killed and 17 wounded in a Serb mortar attack on a market in Sarajevo, the capital; 22 Sarajevans have been killed by shell fire in the past week.

Dec. 7—The UN announces that Serbs are blocking aid convoys to Bosnia; the Serbs had signed a UN-mediated agreement with Bosnia's Croats and Muslims on November 18 to allow free passage of relief supplies.

Dec. 14—In Sarajevo, 11 people are killed in heavy artillery exchanges between Serbs and the Bosnian army.

Dec. 24—Heavy Serb shelling in Sarajevo continues for a 3d day; none of the 3 sides in the conflict has observed a holiday cease-fire agreed on shortly before the Serb attacks began.

BRAZIL

Dec. 16—The Supreme Court rules that former President Ferdinand Collor de Mello, forced to resign by the parliament in 1992 for corruption, may not hold elected office again until the year 2000.

CANADA

Dec. 13—Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell resigns as head of the Conservative party; the Conservatives lost 152 of their 154 seats in the House of Commons in elections in October; Jean Charest will succeed Campbell.

CHILE

Dec. 11—In elections held today, center-left Concertación coalition candidate Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle wins the race for president with 58% of the vote; right-wing candidate Arturo Alessandri receives 24%. Frei's father, Eduardo Frei Montalva, was president of Chile from 1964 to 1970.

CHINA

Dec. 28—In the 3d such incident this month and the 10th this year, a couple accompanied by their young son hijacks a Chinese jetliner and forces the pilots to fly to Taiwan; the

couple is held by Taiwanese authorities rather than being extradited.

Dec. 29—The Central Bank announces that beginning January 1 it will unify its 2-tier system of official exchange rates and much lower semiofficial swap-center rates for a single controlled floating exchange rate based on market supply and demand.

COLOMBIA

Dec. 1—Police and troops kill fugitive Pablo Escobar, the head of the Medellín cocaine cartel, in a shootout in the city of Medellín. Escobar, who was believed to be behind the murders of scores of government officials, escaped from prison 16 months ago.

Dec. 18—About 14 members of a government antinarcotics squad are wounded or killed in an ambush on the Putumayo River along the border with Ecuador; Colombian officials accuse the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia of mounting the attack.

EGYPT

(See also *United States*)

Dec. 9—Fifteen members of Islamic Jihad, a Muslim militant group, are arrested for allegedly plotting assassinations of government officials, including the attempt on Prime Minister Atef Sedki's life November 25.

Dec. 16—In Cairo 3 Muslim militants are hanged for conspiring to overthrow the government and for planning to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak.

Dec. 20—The government executes 6 convicted Islamic militants in Cairo. In the past 2 days 14 people have been killed in attacks by militants; 174 people have died in Egypt in such attacks this year.

Dec. 26—Four police officers are killed by gunmen in El Qusiya in southern Egypt.

Dec. 27—In the 1st attack on tourists in 6 months, suspected Muslim militants bomb a bus in Cairo, wounding 8 Austrian tourists and 8 Egyptian bystanders.

Dec. 31—The government announces it has arrested dozens of Muslim militants from Islamic Group who are accused of plotting to assassinate government leaders and bomb government buildings; the militants were headquartered on an island in the Nile River near the city of Asyut.

GABON

Dec. 18—President Omar Bongo was re-elected in Gabon's 1st multiparty presidential elections, held the 1st week of the month, *The Economist* reports; the official count showed Bongo with 51% of the vote; runner-up Paul M'Ba Abessole says there were gross electoral irregularities.

GERMANY

Dec. 6—In Düsseldorf, the Supreme Court convicts Markus Wolf, who managed the spies of the former East Germany for the Ministry for State Security, of treason and bribery and sentences him to 6 years in prison.

HAITI

Dec. 1—Prime Minister Robert Malval announces he will resign December 15; in an address to the nation, Malval criticizes the military rulers of the country for their failure to negotiate with elected President Jean Aristide, ousted in a 1991 coup; aides call the civilian government "a political fiction."

Dec. 27—Fire destroys 150 homes in Cité Soleil, an Aristide stronghold; shortly before the fire, Paul Issa, treasurer of the

Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, a pro-military group, was killed by a mob; the front denies responsibility for the fire.

HUNGARY

Dec. 18—Interior Minister Peter Boross has been confirmed as prime minister, *The Economist* reports; Boross succeeds Jozsef Antall, who died of cancer December 12; elections are scheduled for May.

INDIA

Dec. 4—Results from November 28 elections for 5 state legislatures show the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party lost control of 3 of the 4 states it formerly controlled: Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

Dec. 30—The Congress party under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao gains a parliamentary majority as 10 members of the Janata Dal party join it; Rao narrowly survived a vote of confidence in July.

IRAN

Dec. 20—Parliament approves a bill making the sale of pornographic videos a capital crime.

ISRAEL

(See also *Intl. Middle East Peace Conference*)

Dec. 1—In response to today's killing of an Israeli woman by Palestinian gunmen in El Bireh, north of Jerusalem, settlers set up traffic blockades on major highways in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Dec. 5—A Palestinian is killed by Israeli settlers in the West Bank city of Hebron. Yesterday some 80 gun-wielding settlers wounded 3 Palestinians in the city; settlers have been rioting there since December 2, when Palestinians killed two settlers in El Bireh.

Dec. 6—Palestinians thought to belong to the militant Islamic group Hamas kill 2 Israeli settlers in Hebron. In Arura, also in the West Bank, Israeli army officers kill a suspected Hamas member.

Dec. 10—Three Arabs are killed by gunmen in the West Bank; Kach, a militant anti-Arab group, claims responsibility, saying the killings were in retaliation for the murders of the 2 Jews in Hebron earlier this week.

Hanan Ashrawi resigns as spokeswoman for the PLO; she says she will form a human rights group to monitor the PLO takeover of the occupied territories under the September agreement with Israel on Palestinian self-rule.

Dec. 15—Israel allows the remaining 200 of 415 Palestinians expelled from Israel in December 1992 to return from their camp in southern Lebanon. The Palestinians, suspected of being Hamas members, were forced to leave following the killing of 5 Israeli servicemen by Hamas.

Dec. 16—The Israeli army orders troops to take "strong action" against settlers who incite violence in the occupied territories.

Dec. 22—Palestinian gunmen kill two Israelis in the West Bank; Hamas and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine both claim responsibility.

Dec. 24—Two suspected members of Hamas kill an Israeli army colonel, Meir Mintz, in the West Bank. Mintz was the commander of a unit that tracked down fugitive Palestinians.

Dec. 30—Israeli and Vatican officials sign an agreement on the initiation of diplomatic relations, including the exchange of ambassadors and cooperation in the fight against anti-Semitism. The Vatican recognized Israel but had refused to establish diplomatic links because of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and Israeli refusal to cede control over Jerusa-

lem to international authorities.

Israeli soldiers kill 3 Palestinian guerrillas attempting to enter Israel from Lebanon; Fatah-Uprising, one of several Palestinian groups opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian accords, claims responsibility for the attempt.

IVORY COAST

Dec. 7—President Félix Houphouët-Boigny dies; he was the longest-serving head of state in Africa, assuming office in 1960; the speaker of parliament, Henri Konan-Bédié, replaces him under the constitution and will serve until elections in 1995.

JAPAN

Dec. 2—Defense Minister Keisuke Nakanishi resigns; the Socialist party, which is a partner in the governing coalition, had called for him to step down after he suggested yesterday that the constitution be amended to explicitly authorize troops' participation in peacekeeping missions.

Dec. 7—Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa says Japan will open its protected rice market to imports; South Korea and the US have reached a similar deal in General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade talks.

Dec. 24—In a televised news conference, Prime Minister Hosokawa apologizes for failing to get political and electoral reform bills through parliament by his self-imposed deadline of the end of the year; he says, however, that he will not resign over the issue, as he implied he would on taking office.

KAZAKHSTAN

Dec. 13—During a visit by US Vice President Al Gore, parliament approves the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 238 to 1. In Almaty, the capital, President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Gore sign a pact under which Kazakhstan will begin dismantling its more than 100 strategic missiles and 1,400 nuclear warheads in return for approximately \$84 million in US aid.

KOREA, SOUTH

(See also *Japan*)

Dec. 7—In Seoul, more than 30,000 protesters demonstrate against the government's recent agreement in world trade talks to allow rice imports.

Dec. 16—President Kim Young Sam dismisses Prime Minister Hwang In Sung; Hwang says he is being sacrificed to public discontent over the opening of the rice market. Kim names to the prime ministership former Supreme Court justice Lee Hoi Chang.

KUWAIT

(See *United States*)

LEBANON

Dec. 20—Two people are killed in East Beirut when the headquarters of the Phalangist party, a rightist Christian group, is bombed; no one takes responsibility.

LIBYA

(See *United States*)

MALAWI

Dec. 7—State radio announces that President Hastings Kamuzu Banda's doctors have declared him able to resume his duties and says the 3-man council that has run the country

in his place has been disbanded; Banda, who is in his nineties, underwent brain surgery 2 months ago.

MEXICO

Dec. 25—The national government awards the disputed mayoralty of Mérida, the capital of Yucatán state, to the opposition National Action party (PAN) candidate; both PAN and the ruling Institutional Revolutionary party claimed to have won the mayor's post and the governorship in elections held November 28.

PERU

Dec. 18—Eleven soldiers are charged with the kidnapping and murder of a professor and nine students who disappeared in July 1992.

Dec. 31—Thirteen people are wounded when Shining Path guerrillas bomb two banks in Lima to mark the 100th birthday of Mao Zedong.

PHILIPPINES

Dec. 26—A grenade attack on the Roman Catholic cathedral in Davao kills at least 4 worshippers and wounds 119; a similar attack on the church in 1981 left 17 dead; Muslim and Communist guerrillas are active in the area.

ROMANIA

Dec. 16—In protests marking the 1989 uprising against President Nicolae Ceausescu, more than 15,000 demonstrators march on the offices of the government of Prime Minister Nicolae Varcaoiu in Bucharest, some calling for the resignation of President Ion Iliescu and the return of King Michael, who was banished in 1947.

RUSSIA

(See *Intl*, *CIS*)

Dec. 23—Lev Fyodorov, president of the Independent Union for Chemical Safety, says at a news conference in Moscow that "tens of thousands" of workers at Soviet chemical weapons plants died as a result of their exposure to the chemicals, mainly before the mid-1950s.

Dec. 26—Halfway through an extremely slow vote count after parliamentary elections held on December 12, final results of party-preferential voting are reported in today's *New York Times*. In this balloting, used to fill half the seats in the new 450-member State Duma, the lower legislative chamber, the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy received 22.8% of the vote, winning 59 seats; the major pro-government bloc, Russia's Choice, under deputy prime minister Yegor Gaidar, captured 15.4%, for 40 seats; and the Communist party won 12.6%, for 32 seats; the centrist Women of Russia and the Communist Agrarian party won 8.1% and 7.9% of the vote, respectively, for 21 seats apiece; parties garnering less than 5% are not eligible for party-preferential seats. Results from single-constituency races for the 225 other seats in the Duma and the 176 seats in the upper house are not yet final. Russians also approved, by a majority of 52%, a new constitution that establishes the bicameral parliament and a strong president empowered to sidestep or dissolve it. Turnout was 54.8%. To a question about the election at a news conference December 22, Yeltsin replied, "To be disappointed with democracy would mean to lose hope."

SAUDI ARABIA

Dec. 27—New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau announces that Sheik Khalid bin Mahfouz, a former chief ex-

ecutive of the National Commerce Bank of Saudi Arabia who has been seen as King Fahd's personal banker, and an associate have agreed to pay \$225 million to settle US federal and state charges in connection with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International scandal.

Dec. 28—The 61 members of the new Majlis al-Shura Council, a consultative body without legislative powers, take the oath of office; they will hold their 1st session tomorrow. The council, appointed by King Fahd, is seen as a move toward popular participation in government.

SOMALIA

Dec. 2—In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, informal reconciliation talks between at least a dozen of the country's rival factions begin; the discussions, sponsored by the Ethiopian government, are the 1st since March to include General Mohammed Farah Aidid, 1 of the 2 most powerful faction leaders.

Dec. 8—US special envoy Robert Oakley and Major General Antony Zinni, the former director of US humanitarian-military operations in Somalia, have said in interviews that between 6,000 and 10,000 Somalis were killed and wounded between June 5 and October 3, after the UN assumed control of the mission, *The New York Times* reports; the statistics came out of the talks between the factions that began December 2.

SOUTH AFRICA

Dec. 6—Last-minute talks between groups supporting the country's planned transition to nonracial democracy and several holdout groups collapse; the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom party and several Afrikaner and white supremacist parties have announced they will boycott parliamentary elections scheduled for April 27.

Dec. 7—In Cape Town, the 32-member black-majority Transitional Executive Committee, charged with overseeing the runoff to the elections, holds its 1st meeting; it is South Africa's 1st official government body with black members.

Dec. 8—The bodies of at least 8 people killed execution-style are discovered in Katilehong, a black township east of Johannesburg. In the black township of Bekkersdal west of Johannesburg, a mob of some 100 people armed with axes and spears kills 4 people.

Dec. 22—By a 237-45 vote, parliament ratifies the interim constitution approved last month by more than 20 political parties and government bodies.

Dec. 23—Patford Musa Shuma, an aide to Cyril Ramaphosa, the secretary general of the ANC, is assassinated in central Johannesburg.

Dec. 25—At least 37 people have been killed in factional violence in Natal province in the past week, *The New York Times* reports.

Dec. 31—The Azanian People's Liberation Army and the Azanian National Liberation Army claim responsibility for an attack yesterday by several gunmen on a tavern in a white section of Cape Town that left at least 4 people dead and 5 wounded; both groups oppose sharing power with whites.

SUDAN

Dec. 30—The government orders the British ambassador to leave the country after the visiting Archbishop of Canterbury cancels a visit to Khartoum while on his trip to meet with Christian groups in the rebel-held south.

SYRIA

(See also *United States*)

Dec. 5—In Damascus, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher announces that by January 1 President Hafez al-Assad will issue exit visas to all Syrian Jews who request them.

TURKMENISTAN

(See *Intl, CIS*)

UKRAINE

Dec. 20—Officials in Kiev announce that 17 of the nation's 46 SS-24 missiles, the most modern in Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, have been deactivated.

UNITED KINGDOM

Great Britain

(See *Sudan*)

Northern Ireland

Dec. 3—In Keady, an IRA sniper kills a British soldier.

Dec. 15—In London, Prime Ministers John Major of Britain and Albert Reynolds of the Irish Republic sign a declaration of principles to encourage peaceful settlement of the 25-year-old conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; Britain and Ireland agree any settlement must be based on democratic self-determination and include the right to freedom of religion and peaceful political expression; Britain states that it has no strategic or economic interest in the province but says Ulster may remain part of Britain as long as it wants; all parties that renounce violence will be invited to negotiations.

Dec. 30—In the village of Crossmaglen, a sniper kills a British soldier; the IRA takes responsibility.

UNITED STATES

(See also *Japan; Kazakhstan; Saudi Arabia; Somalia*)

Dec. 6—Administration officials announce that the US will allow Syria to transfer 3 American-made commercial aircraft to Kuwait in a relaxation of sanctions against Syria.

Dec. 13—*The New York Times* reports that State Department documents show that during the Bush administration the US military was responsible for the training of about 50 wealthy Salvadorans who were members of a group associated with right-wing death squads.

Dec. 15—Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announces that he is resigning for "personal reasons."

Dec. 16—President Bill Clinton nominates former Navy Admiral Bobby Ray Inman to succeed Aspin.

VATICAN CITY

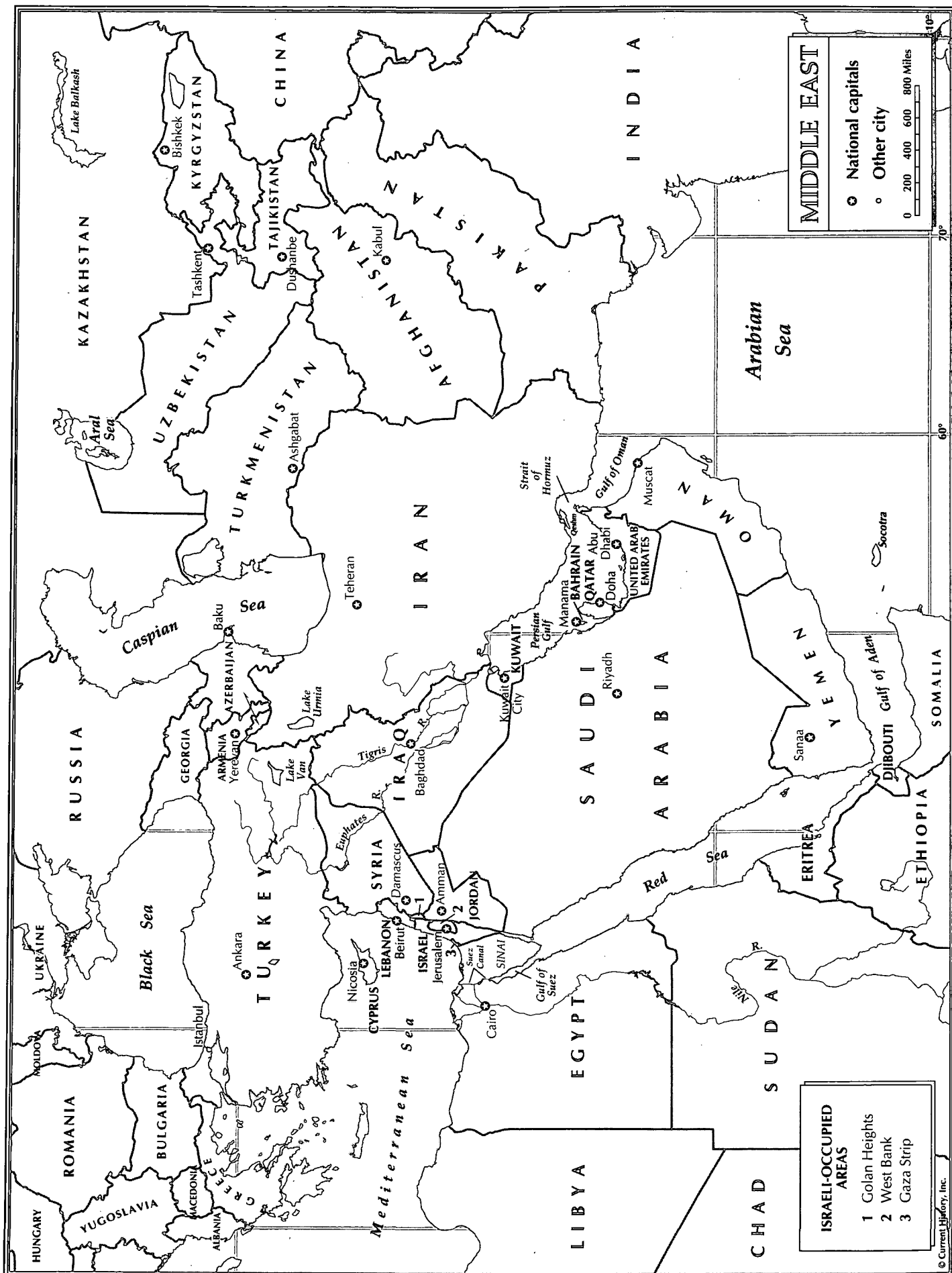
(See *Israel*)

VENEZUELA

Dec. 7—In elections held 2 days ago, independent candidate Rafael Caldera Rodríguez won the vote for the presidency; Rodríguez served as president from 1968 to 1974; he won about 30% of the vote, which was split among four candidates, including Oswaldo Alvarez Paz of the Social Christian Party (COPEI) and Radical Cause party member Andrés Velásquez.

YUGOSLAVIA

Dec. 19—In today's parliamentary elections in Serbia, the Socialist party of President Slobodan Milosevic wins 123 seats, 3 short of a majority, and the opposition Serbian Radical party headed by Vojislav Seselj drops from 73 seats to 39. ■



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